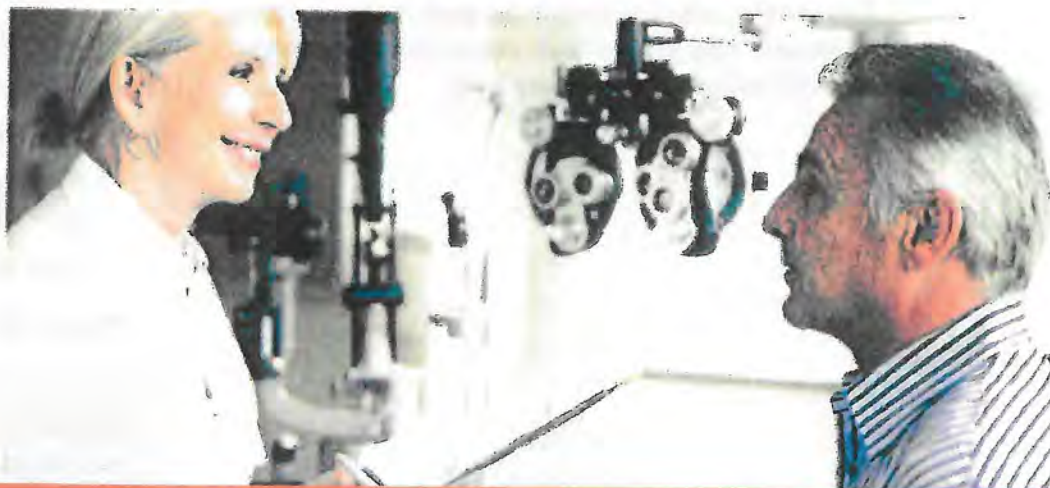




Vision

What you should know

Do you have heart disease? How your vision may be at risk



Heart disease –also known as cardiovascular disease - is caused by narrowed and blocked blood vessels that keep your heart, brain and other parts of your body from receiving enough oxygen-rich blood. This blood vessel narrowing can also hurt the blood vessels inside your eyes. Your eye doctor can detect signs of heart disease and high blood pressure. For many people, their eye doctor is the first to detect their heart-related conditions.

The damage caused by heart disease and high blood pressure inside the eye is called hypertensive retinopathy. Studies have shown the presence of retinopathy can be a reason for starting blood pressure treatment. Early retinal blood vessel changes have been noted to predict the risk of high blood pressure even in people with normal blood pressure readings.¹

People with signs of hypertensive retinopathy also have a two to four times greater risk for stroke. They are also at higher risk of developing strokes within the eye that can lead to blindness. A comprehensive eye exam can identify and control hypertension, heart disease, and their many complications. If your eye doctor detects any problems he or she will contact your primary care doctor for further testing.

One of the best ways to prevent retinopathy is by avoiding major heart disease risk factors such as smoking. Smoking is one of the greatest causes of heart disease. Not only does it increase your risk of retinopathy, it also increases your chance of cataracts and other conditions such as macular degeneration.²

Remember to schedule a yearly eye exam. Your eye doctor might catch early signs of heart disease before it damages your eyes and other parts of your body.

Ways you can control your blood pressure:

- Eat a better diet, which may include reducing salt
- Enjoy regular physical activity
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Manage stress
- Avoid tobacco smoke
- Comply with medication prescriptions
- If you drink, limit alcohol

Source: www.cdc.gov

Bridge2Health is our approach to health care benefits. Through Bridge2Health, we empower our members to improve their overall health through health and wellness education, information and tips.



1. Wong T.Y. and Mitchell P. Hypertensive Retinopathy, N Engl J Med 2004; 351:2310 - 2317.

2. ACK Cheng, et al. Smoking and ocular diseases HKMJ 2000; 6:195-202

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Heart Health

In This Issue:

- ▶ Heart Disease and Diet: Could You Use Some TLC?
- ▶ Nutty Ways to Keep Your Heart Healthy
- ▶ What the Doctor Ordered: Exercise Prescriptions?
- ▶ Step-by-Step: Exercising With Heart Disease

Heart Disease and Diet: Could You Use Some TLC?

If you have high cholesterol, are at risk for heart disease or just want to follow a healthy diet, see what the TLC diet can do for you.

Fighting heart disease? Give yourself a little “TLC.” In this case, TLC stands for “Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes” – tender, loving care you can give yourself.

When faced with heart disease, you can’t expect cholesterol-lowering medications to work alone. Good nutrition, regular exercise, not smoking and keeping a healthy weight are essential, too. At the core of the TLC program is a diet recommended by the American Heart Association.

TLC daily diet

The TLC diet is a low-saturated fat, low-cholesterol, high-fiber diet. It is targeted at people who already have high cholesterol levels and are considered high-risk. The goal is to help reduce your cholesterol level and cut your chance of heart disease, future heart attacks and/or other complications. This could include diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

To follow the TLC diet:

Get 25 percent to 35 percent of your calories from fat.

- Focus on healthy sources of fat, such as olive and canola oils, fatty fish, nuts, seeds and avocado.
- If your carbohydrate intake is high, replace some of your refined carbs with healthy fats – especially if you have pre-diabetes, diabetes or high triglycerides.



Video Spotlight

[Just a Little Heart Attack](#)

[Heart-Healthy Diets](#)

[Is Heart Disease](#)

[Hereditary?](#)



Heart Health

Keep saturated fat intake to no more than 7 percent of total calories.

- Limit meats like beef, bacon and sausage, and keep high-fat milk and cheese to a minimum.
- Choose fish, or chicken or turkey without skin.
- Also avoid trans fatty acids, which can raise LDL.

Keep dietary cholesterol to less than 200 mg.

- Limit egg yolks to two a week.
- Limit portions of red meat to 3 ounces, no more than twice a week.
- Eat more vegetarian meals.
- Choose fish more often. Even shrimp can be enjoyed now and then. It's very low in fat despite having 167 mg of cholesterol in 3 ounces.

Make carbs 50 percent to 60 percent of your total calories.

- Focus on whole grains, beans, fruits and vegetables, which have more nutrients and fiber.
- Limit refined grains such as white flour products and foods high in sugar. This includes pastries, muffins, biscuits, butter rolls and doughnuts.

Get 10 to 25 grams of soluble fiber.

- Eat more oatmeal, oat bran, beans and legumes, and barley.
- Increase intake of fruits and vegetables, especially peas, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, artichokes, grapefruit, oranges, apples, jicama, blackberries, strawberries and pears.

Get about 15 percent of your calories from protein.

- Choose lean sources such as turkey, fish, chicken and low-fat cottage cheese.
- Vegetarian sources of protein include nuts and seeds, beans, grains and veggies.

Keep sodium to less than 2,400 mg a day.

- Avoid canned products with excess salt.
- Choose low-sodium soups.
- Avoid the salt shaker, and use extra spices and herbs for flavoring.

Keep calories in check.

- Balance calories to maintain desirable body weight and prevent weight gain.
- This should include burning at least 200 calories a day through exercise.
- Watch portions and do not overeat.

If these changes don't help, consider increasing plant stanols in your diet. Two grams a day of plant stanols (substances found in certain plant foods), can reduce LDL levels by 10 percent to 15 percent. Plant stanols are now being added to some yogurts, orange juices, granola bars and margarine spreads.

Your doctor may also refer you to a registered dietitian, who can help you choose the right foods, plan realistic menus, monitor your progress and encourage you to follow the meal plan.

Whether or not you have high cholesterol, you should follow a healthy diet filled with fruits and vegetables and get regular exercise as advised by your doctor. That's a bit of TLC advice everyone could use.



Nutty Ways to Keep Your Heart Healthy

Research shows that nuts are heart-healthy. Find out why and how to add them to your diet.

Go nuts to love your heart! Research continues to show that eating nuts as part of a healthy diet can be good for you. But they're better for you when not eaten simply as a dessert topper. Read on to get the full scoop.

Nuts and your heart:

- If you have heart disease, nuts are healthier than many other snacks.
- Eating nuts as part of a heart-healthy diet lowers LDL (bad cholesterol) levels in your blood.
- Eating nuts reduces your risk for blood clots that can cause a fatal heart attack.
- Nuts are rich in unsaturated fats (including omega-3s), which can help your heart.
- Nuts are high in vitamin E and fiber.
- Nuts are a good vegetarian source of protein.

How much should you eat?

- All nuts are good, but some are better than others. Walnuts have the highest amount of omega-3 fats. Almonds, macadamias, hazelnuts, cashews, peanuts and pecans also rank high.
- Nuts lose their healthy benefits if covered in salt, chocolate or sugar.
- Nuts pack a lot of calories for a small amount, so watch your portion size. The recommended amount is 2 ounces of nuts each day. However, as little as 2 ounces per week seem to produce benefits.
- Use nuts to replace less-healthy snacks or foods. Adding nuts to a diet high in saturated fat will not help.

Menu ideas:

- Add 2 tablespoons of nuts to yogurt in the morning.
- Use them as a healthy substitute for more-fattening salad toppers.



- Try crushed walnuts with light cream cheese on an English muffin.
- Enjoy a handful of nuts with a piece of fresh fruit for an afternoon snack.
- Mix nuts with berries and add to cold or hot cereal.
- Munch on a small handful of soynuts for a quick, savory snack.
- Mix nuts into quick breads or muffin mixes.
- Add cashews to a stir-fry recipe.
- For a healthy fruit snack, spread a tablespoon of natural peanut butter onto celery or a sliced apple.

The chart below shows the amount of nuts in 1 ounce, along with other nutritional information. Remember, the fat in nuts is mostly healthy. Nuts are also packed with other vitamins and minerals.

Nuts (1 ounce)	Calories	Total Fat (g)	Protein	Fiber
Almonds (24)	160	14	6	3
Brazil nuts (6)	190	19	4	2
Cashews (18)	160	13	4	1
Chestnuts (3)	65	0.6	1	1
Hazelnuts (20)	180	17	4	3
Macadamia nuts(8)	160	17	2	2
Pecans (20 halves)	200	20	3	3
Pine nuts (157)	160	14	7	3
Pistachios (47)	160	13	6	3
Walnuts (12 halves)	160	15	4	2
For Comparison				
Potato Chips (12 chips)	150	10	2	0
Doritos (11 chips)	150	8	1	0
Double-Stuff Oreos (3)	210	12	2	0
Glazed doughnut (1)	200	12	2	.5
Snickers bar (1)	280	14	3	1

What the Doctor Ordered: Exercise Prescriptions

Want to start exercising, but can't find the motivation? A visit to your doctor may help.



Everyone knows they should exercise. The reasons to exercise seem endless – from better weight control to stress reduction. The risks of not being physically active are also well known. A higher risk for heart disease, cancer and diabetes are just a few. But 1 in 4 American adults do not exercise at all and more than half don't work out enough. So what can make you start exercising? A trip to your doctor may be in order.

Exercise prescriptions

If your doctor writes you a prescription for an antibiotic, you are most likely going to take it. But what if your doctor writes you a prescription to exercise? The same thing holds true.

Research shows that people are likely to start and stick to an exercise program if their doctor tells them to do so. One study shows that people are more likely to follow their doctor's advice if the doctor writes an actual prescription instead of just verbally telling them.

So why do people listen to their doctor's exercise advice? One reason may be that people are more concerned with their health when they are at the doctor's office. This may make them more willing to follow the doctor's orders.

Check with your doctor before starting an exercise program for medical clearance and to help develop for a specific exercise plan that is right for you.

Your exercise plan

A typical exercise prescription often contains all three types of exercise for a balanced workout:

1. **Cardiovascular exercise.** These are exercises that raise your heart rate and use large muscles. Experts recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise each week.

With your doctor's approval, start out slow and increase your cardiovascular exercise to most days of the week. If you like, break up your aerobic activity into periods of at least 10 minutes each and spread throughout the week. Good exercises include:

- Walking
- Biking
- Swimming
- Jogging
- Elliptical machine

2. **Muscle-strengthening activities.** These exercises include moderate or high-intensity activities that increase strength and endurance of all major muscle groups. Examples of strength training include weightlifting and resistance training.

Flexibility. Exercises that stretch your muscles and increase your range of motion boast your flexibility. Doctors often suggest bending and stretching in daily activities, but be sure to stretch only after a proper warm-up to the activity. Taking a yoga class may also help improve flexibility.

Tips to help you stay on track

- **Start slowly.** You may need to start with 10 minutes of exercise at a time and gradually build up to your weekly goals.
- **Do something you enjoy.** You are more likely to stick with an exercise you enjoy doing. If you love to swim, consider joining a gym that has a pool.
- **Find a convenient time and place.** Not all physical activity has to be done at the gym. Choose a time and place that is most convenient

for you. Walk around your office parking lot on your lunch break or do jumping jacks and push-ups during commercial breaks of television shows.

- **Get a workout buddy.** Exercise with a friend. It's a lot harder to skip a workout if someone is counting on you.
- **Don't overdo it.** Slowly increase workout time and intensity.

- **Keep a record of your exercise progress.** An exercise journal will show you how far you've come. Reward yourself when you reach milestones.
- **Wear comfortable shoes and clothes.** Wear shoes and clothes that are appropriate for the activity you are doing.

Remember to keep up with your exercise plan, just like you would any other prescription for good health.

Step-by-Step: Exercising With Heart Disease

Having coronary artery disease or another heart problem needn't keep you from being fit. Find out why doctors advise exercise and learn the steps to work out safely.

A monitored exercise program, such as cardiac rehab, is usually advised for someone who has severe heart disease, is recovering from a heart attack or has had heart surgery. But if you have a minor, stable heart condition, or you have already gone through cardiac rehabilitation, your doctor may prescribe an exercise program that you can do on your own. Regular exercise can be safe and has many benefits. It can:

- Improve cholesterol levels. Exercise can help lower LDL (bad cholesterol) and raise HDL (good cholesterol).
- Help you manage medical conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes.
- Help you reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Increase endurance, and improve muscular strength and flexibility.

Follow these steps to make exercise safe and enjoyable:



1. **See your doctor.** Even if you have no symptoms, but have a heart condition such as coronary artery disease or high blood pressure, it's important to talk to your doctor before you start or increase your exercise level. Also, see your doctor if you're middle-aged or older, have other medical problems, haven't exercised in a while or plan to start a vigorous program. The doctor visit to talk about exercise should include a discussion of:
 - **Medications.** Let your doctor know about all of the medications you take. Some medications, such as beta-blockers, interfere with your body's response to exercise.

- **Choices of exercise.** Get clearance for a well-rounded exercise program. You may benefit from a fitness program that includes aerobic exercise (such as brisk walking, swimming or cycling), resistance training (weightlifting or strength training) and some kind of stretching routine, such as yoga. If you are elderly or frail, your doctor may advise you to start with a resistance training program with light weights and exercises that help you with balance and prevent falls. Resistance training has been shown to benefit even people who have heart failure (except those with heart valve disease).
- **Cardiac rehab.** If you've recently had a heart attack or have a more serious heart condition, your doctor may suggest a cardiac rehab program. Cardiac rehabilitation is supervised exercise, based at a hospital or outpatient facility, while your vital signs are monitored. It also includes counseling on healthy eating, smoking cessation and other lifestyle factors to cut the risk of further heart disease or a second heart attack.
- **Exercise testing.** If you don't have a prescription for cardiac rehab, your doctor may still refer you for exercise testing. Also called a "treadmill test," exercise testing usually involves running on a treadmill or

riding a stationary bicycle while your heart, blood pressure and breathing are monitored. The test measures your cardiovascular response to exercise, helps reveal conditions such as coronary artery disease and can determine what level of exercise is safe for you.

- **Target heart rate zone.** This is the zone, or range of heart rates (pulse rates), within which your doctor advises you to exercise so you can get the most benefit from your workout. An example of a target heart rate zone for a person in good health is 50 percent to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate. Maximum heart rate is measured as 220 minus your age. Depending on your age and condition, your own target heart rate zone may be different. Fall below the zone, and you may not be exercising intensely enough. Exceed the zone, and you risk putting too much strain on your heart. Your physician can help you find a target heart rate zone that best matches your needs, goals and physical condition.
- **Frequency of exercise.** The American Heart Association and American Council on Exercise recommend an exercise goal of at least three to four times per week for at least 30 minutes. If you're out of shape, ask your doctor about working out for 10 minutes two to three times a day at first before doing a full 30 minutes. These mini-workouts are still very beneficial.

2. Warning signs. Before you start an exercise program, it's important to be aware of any symptoms you might have had that would make working out dangerous. Do not exercise, and call your doctor, if you have had any of these symptoms in the past:

- Pain or pressure in the left or mid-chest, left neck or shoulder area during or right after exercise
- Developed chest pain within the last month
- Passed out or fainted during or after exercise
- Dizziness or a feeling like you're going to fall during exercise
- Shortness of breath or severe fatigue after mild exertion
- Joint or muscle pain that gets worse with exercise



3. Call 911 for:

- Crushing or tearing chest pain, pressure, heaviness or tightness
- Any chest pain, pressure, heaviness or tightness along with any dizziness, lightheadedness, passing out, sweating, nausea, vomiting, palpitations or very fast, slow or irregular heartbeat
- Chest pain that is not relieved with nitroglycerin
- Shortness of breath or extreme, labored breathing

4. Follow exercise guidelines regarding:

- **Hydration.** Drink water before exercising and periodically during your workout, even if you don't feel thirsty. But follow any fluid restriction guidelines from your doctor.
- **Weather.** Avoid extremes in weather. Very cold, or hot, humid weather can put a strain on the heart and circulatory system. Stay indoors and exercise in a temperature-controlled environment.
- **Interruptions to your routine.** If you've interrupted your exercise routine due to vacation, sickness or inclement weather, ease back into your workout program.
- **Phased workouts.** Every workout should include three phases: a warm-up, a conditioning period and a cool-down. Start with a full 10- to 15-minute warm-up, such as walking on a treadmill to increase your breathing and circulation gradually. Most of your workout is in the conditioning phase, during which you slowly increase the intensity of exercise. Cool-down for a few minutes by decreasing the activity of your conditioning exercise.
- **Heart rate zone.** Stay within your target heart zone.



Is it safe?

You may worry that you'll have a heart attack or another problem while exercising. This is a normal worry. But rest assured that research shows complications during cardiac rehab programs are rare. Also, the overall risk of a cardiac event appears to be reduced in people who are regular exercisers.

