

Cardiovascular Health

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Cardiovascular Health

Introduces ways to maintain health of the cardiovascular system.

Cardiovascular Health



[Figure1]

Why is smoking bad for you?

Most people associate smoking with lung disease. But that is not the only health risk of smoking. Smoking is also a major cause of cardiovascular disease.

Keeping Your Cardiovascular System Healthy

There are many risk factors that can cause a person to develop cardiovascular disease. A **risk factor** is anything that is linked to an increased chance of developing a disease. Some of the risk factors for cardiovascular disease you cannot control, but there are many risk factors you can control.

Risk factors you cannot control include:

- **Age:** The older a person is, the greater their chance of developing a cardiovascular disease.
- **Gender:** Men under age 64 are much more likely to die of coronary [heart](#) disease than women, although the gender difference decreases with age.
- **Genetics:** Family history of cardiovascular disease increases a person's chance of developing [heart](#) disease.

Risk factors you can control include many lifestyle factors:

- *Tobacco smoking*: Giving up smoking or never starting to smoke is the best way to reduce the risk of heart disease.
- *Diabetes*: [Diabetes](#) can cause bodily changes, such as high cholesterol levels, which are risk factors for cardiovascular disease.
- *High cholesterol levels*: High amounts of "bad cholesterol," increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.
- ***Obesity***: Having a very high percentage of body fat, especially if the fat is mostly found in the upper body, rather than the hips and thighs, increases risk significantly.
- *High blood pressure*: If the heart and [blood vessels](#) have to work harder than normal, this puts the [cardiovascular system](#) under a strain.
- *Lack of physical activity*: Aerobic activities, such as the one pictured below (**Figure below**), help keep your heart healthy. To reduce the risk of disease, you should be active for at least 60 minutes a day, five days a week.
- *Poor eating habits*: Eating mostly foods that do not have many nutrients other than fat or [carbohydrate](#) leads to high cholesterol levels, obesity, and cardiovascular disease (**Figure below**).



[Figure2]

60 minutes a day of vigorous aerobic activity, such as basketball, is enough to help keep your [cardiovascular system](#) healthy.



[Figure3]

The USDA's MyPyramid recommends that you limit the amount of such foods in your diet to occasional treats.

What is bad cholesterol?

Cholesterol can't dissolve in the blood. It has to be transported to and from the [cells](#) by carriers called lipoproteins. Low-density lipoprotein, or LDL, is known as "bad" cholesterol. High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is known as good cholesterol. When too much LDL cholesterol circulates in the blood, it can slowly build up in the inner walls of the arteries that feed the heart and brain. Together with other substances, it can form plaque, and lead to atherosclerosis. If a clot forms and blocks a narrowed artery, a heart attack or stroke can result. Cholesterol comes from the food you eat as well as being made by the body. To lower bad cholesterol, a diet low in saturated fat and dietary cholesterol should be followed. Regular aerobic [exercise](#) also lowers LDL cholesterol and increases HDL cholesterol.

Summary

- A family history of cardiovascular disease increases a person's chance of developing heart disease.
- Having a poor diet and not getting enough [exercise](#) are two major causes of cardiovascular disease.

Explore More

Use the resource below to answer the questions that follow.

- **Healthy Heart For Life! - Mayo Clinic** at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYGsggzCMSE> (2:10)



1. How many fruits and vegetables should be eaten daily to keep your heart healthy?
2. How much should you move a day to help prevent heart disease?
3. How much should you sleep a day to help prevent heart disease?
4. How much heart disease is preventable?

Review

1. What is a risk factor?
2. What are three risk factors for cardiovascular disease?
3. What are some steps you can take to avoid cardiovascular disease?
4. What is bad cholesterol?

Vocabulary

Language: English ▼

Term	Definition
obesity	disorder in which a person has a high percentage of body fat, which increases the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, and other health problems.
risk factor	Anything that is linked to an increased chance of developing a disease.

1.0 REFERENCES

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