

# KEEP YOUR ♥ HAPPY

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Heart disease is the No. 1 cause of death in the United States. Although The Portland Clinic Cardiology Department offers excellent treatments, the best way to avoid becoming a part of that statistic is to keep your heart happy and healthy in the first place. Here are 10 ways to do that.

- 1. If you smoke, quit.** Smoking accelerates every bad process in your coronary arteries. It also reduces the effectiveness of medications used to treat heart problems. It is the worst thing you can do to your heart. Quitting is the best.
- 2. Get some exercise.** The more you exercise, the higher the capacity of your heart function. Activity also helps control weight — a good move for your heart.
- 3. Practice portion control.** Supersized portions are a key cause of weight gain, which increases your chances of developing heart disease.
- 4. Eat more vegetables.** They are powerhouses of heart-healthy nutrients, and they're naturally lower in calories than most other foods. Fill half of every lunch and dinner plate with vegetables. Discover new vegetables at the farmer's market. Become the world's best salad maker.
- 5. Eat more fish.** According to the Mayo Clinic, eating fish once or twice a week could reduce the risk of dying of a heart attack by a third or more, thanks to the beneficial omega-3 fatty acids and unsaturated fats in fish.  
Eat salmon, herring, trout and other fish instead of meat at least twice a week. Don't like fish? Cut saturated fat by choosing lean chicken and turkey instead of red meat, and get your omega-3s from walnuts and ground flax seeds.
- 6. Cook with healthy fats.** Saturated fats (from butter, meat and other animal products) and trans fats (in "partially hydrogenated" oils) raise bad cholesterol. Unsaturated fats (in nuts, avocados, olives and their oils) help keep it low. Scrap the shortening and butter — cook with heart-healthy canola, vegetable and olive oils instead, and avoid anything that says "hydrogenated" on the label.
- 7. Go for the whole grain.** White flour, white rice and other "refined" grains act like sugars, increasing your body's insulin response and triggering weight gain.  
Stick with whole-grain breads, cereals, rice and flour, and steer clear of cookies, cakes and other sugary, white-flour treats.
- 8. Keep your numbers in check.** Diabetes, high blood pressure and bad cholesterol — three of the top risk factors for heart disease — can go unchecked for years, or even decades, without any external warning signs.  
Get routine checkups to keep an eye on these numbers. If any of them starts to look a little high, work with your doctor to get it under control.
- 9. De-stress.** Too much stress can do a number on your heart, and trying to cope in unhealthy ways — by eating sugary comfort foods, drinking too much or zoning out on the couch — can cause weight gain and other harm.  
The best stress reliever is regular exercise (see No. 2). Other things that can help: talking with someone you trust, prioritizing your time, practicing relaxation through yoga, meditation and deep breathing, and having fun (see No. 10).
- 10. Find your bliss.** People who are unhappy or depressed, like people who are stressed out, tend to let themselves go. Diet, fitness, weight and sleep — not to mention overall quality of life — all suffer as a result. And so does the heart.  
If you are angry, depressed or unhappy most of the time, tell your doctor — there may be a medical cause that can be treated. Find time every week to do what you love: spend time in nature, listen to music, paint, write, volunteer, help others — whatever warms your heart. Repeat frequently