



Women & Heart Disease: Tips for Staying Healthy

“My advice to women is to do one good thing for your heart every day. Protect your heart by making healthy choices that are right for you.” — **Martha Gulati, MD, FACC**

- 1. Take stock of your heart disease risk at every age.** We change as we age, and so do our risk factors! If you are approaching menopause or have had a pregnancy with a preterm delivery, gestational hypertension (called preeclampsia) or gestational diabetes, ask how these events can affect your chance of having heart problems.
- 2. Schedule routine health checkups and mark the dates on your calendar.** Important numbers are measured at these visits: your weight, body mass index (BMI), waist measurement, blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
- 3. Know and keep tabs on your numbers.** Keep a notepad or use an app to track your numbers. For example, do you know your blood sugar, blood pressure, blood cholesterol levels and weight? Are they under control or within a healthy range?
- 4. Start or step up your exercise program.** Aim to get 30-45 minutes of exercise most days. Walking, riding a bike, swimming—even gardening or heavy housework—count. Talk with your health care provider about what exercise routine is best for you.
- 5. Maintain a healthy weight.** Ask your provider what that number is. Women with more of an apple-shaped body and too much fat around their waists appear to be at higher risk of heart issues.
- 6. Eat a healthy diet.** Make healthy food choices every day. Learn which foods have hidden fats, empty calories and added sugars.
- 7. Quit or don't start smoking.** Ask your doctor for information to help you quit smoking.
- 8. Reduce your stress.** Too much stress can affect your health, so it's important to figure out ways to cope with stress. Listen to your favorite music, meditate or go for a walk. If you feel overwhelmed at work or home, ask for help. Only say “yes” to what you can handle.
- 9. Get enough sleep.** Insufficient sleep is bad for the heart, not to mention overall health. A good rule of thumb for adults is to clock at least seven hours of restful sleep a night.
- 10. Limit alcohol to one drink a day or less.** Too much alcohol can lead to weight gain, raise your blood pressure and disrupt how your heart beats.
- 11. Listen to your body.** If you have a feeling that something is wrong, get it checked out. If you think you are having a heart attack, call 911. Early diagnosis and treatment are critical, and may even save your life!