

INFORM Yourself

HEART DISEASE

You Did It!

Congratulations on completing the Focused Wellness program! This issue of *Inform Yourself* is meant to remind you of what you learned. You can draw on this information to help you stay on top of your health. You can also share the information with others. Having people around who understand your condition and how to support you can be a big help.



Making lifestyle changes is an important part of managing heart disease. So is working with your provider.

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Fast Facts About Heart Disease

During your time in the Focused Wellness program, you learned about heart disease and how to manage it. Here are a few quick reminders about the basics.

- Heart disease is a general term that includes more than 20 different conditions.
- High blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking are key risk factors for heart disease.
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States.

Source: American Heart Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

What Not to Do: Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol and other substances can raise your blood pressure, especially if they are not used in moderation.

- **Alcohol.** Heavy drinking can raise your blood pressure and lead to heart failure or stroke. If you drink, do so in moderation. “Moderation” typically means up to one drink per day for women or up to 2 drinks per day for men. Depending on alcohol content, “one drink” usually means 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits.
- **Tobacco.** Smoking or chewing tobacco immediately raises your blood pressure temporarily. Long-term use can damage the lining of your blood vessels, which can make your blood pressure worse and lead to heart disease.
- **Illegal drugs.** Drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine, LSD, and ecstasy/MDMA can alter your blood pressure so much that they can immediately trigger a heart attack or stroke. These drugs should be avoided completely.

Sources: Johns Hopkins Medicine, Mayo Clinic, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism



What is “one drink?”

One drink is defined as a 12-ounce beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits



12 oz.
Beer



5 oz.
Wine



1.5 oz.
Distilled
spirits

Smoking: Get Help to Quit Now!

Smoking is the #1 cause of preventable death and disease in the United States. It can lead to several health problems and it damages your heart and your blood vessels. It can also cause something called atherosclerosis, which is a buildup of fatty substances called plaque in your arteries. Over time, this plaque hardens and narrows your arteries.

Those seem like good reasons to quit smoking! If you smoke, think about taking the following steps to quit.

- Visit **www.smokefree.gov**. You can find tools and tips, talk or chat with an expert, and build a quit plan.
- Call Quit Partner at **1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)**. TTY users call **1-877-777-6534**.

These calls are free. Or, sign up on their website at **www.QuitPartnerMN.com**. Quit Partner offers text messaging, email, and phone support. There is no cost to PrimeWest Health members for this service; however, data and messaging rates from your cell phone provider may apply.

- Talk to your health care provider. They can let you know about services such as individual or group counseling and prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) products to help you quit.

Quitting is hard, but the benefits are worth it. Make a plan to quit and get the help you need to do it.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute



Your Treatment Plan: The Path to Better Health

A treatment plan can help you maximize your heart health and feel your best. If you have a plan, make sure you work with your provider to keep it updated and maintain your progress. If you don't have one, talk to your provider about making one. You can share your treatment plan and other information about your condition with all of your health care providers and caregivers. You can do this by completing a form giving consent for them to access your health information. Talk with your health care provider to learn more about this.

Treatment plans usually include the following key points.

Keep your appointments

Be sure to keep your appointments with all your providers. This includes your primary care provider and specialists. This is key because it's during these appointments that your providers check your blood pressure and make sure you aren't having any issues that require a change in medication. You may also have lab work done to check for complications related to your heart disease.

Stick to your medications

It's important that you take the medications your provider has prescribed the way they have been prescribed. This will help prevent complications and setbacks. Don't stop taking any medications without talking to your health care provider first.

Monitor your weight

If you have certain conditions like heart failure, weighing yourself each day may be part of your treatment plan. Your provider will tell you when you should notify them of a change in weight. An example would be if you gain more than 5 pounds in 1 – 2 days. If this happens, your medications may need to be adjusted.

Exercising and Eating

In general, being overweight puts you at greater risk of developing health problems. You don't have to lose a lot of weight to benefit. Losing 10 pounds can lower your blood pressure and reduce the strain on your heart. There is no magic formula for losing weight. The key is to exercise and eat right.

Exercising

Talk to your health care provider before you start exercising. Together, you can come up with activities that are both safe and fun for you to do. There are 3 types of exercise: cardiovascular (cardio), strength training, and stretching. You should try to make each a part of your exercise routine.

- **Cardiovascular exercise** is good for your heart and lungs. Examples include swimming, biking, walking, and jogging.
- **Strength training** strengthens your muscles. Examples include lifting weights and doing push-ups, sit-ups, and squats.
- **Stretching** makes you more flexible. It also helps you move better and helps prevent injury, so you may want to stretch for a bit before and after you exercise.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends people get 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week. You should spread your activity throughout the week, so a good way to get your time in is to exercise for 20 – 30 minutes a day.



Eating

The DASH eating plan is a plan for eating in a way that promotes heart health. DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. (Hypertension is another way of saying high blood pressure.) Here's what the plan recommends:

- Eating foods that are low in fat and cholesterol
- Eating more vegetables and fruits and eating low- or non-fat dairy foods. The DASH eating plan includes foods like poultry, fish, whole grains, nuts, and foods that are high in potassium, magnesium, protein, and fiber.
- Limiting fats, red meats, and sweets
- Limiting foods that are high in sodium (salt). You can find lots of information about tracking and reducing sodium in your diet on the American Heart Association's (AHA) website at www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium.



Talk to your health care provider about promoting heart health through weight management, exercise, and diet. You can find more information about maintaining a healthy weight through exercise and diet on the AHA's website at www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/losing-weight.

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Sources: AHA; CDC; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; WebMD



Make Medication a Must

Heart disease can't always be controlled without treatment. As part of your treatment plan, your health care provider will likely prescribe medication. Medication can help you manage your blood pressure and cholesterol. It can also help reduce your risk of complications such as a stroke.

Some of the medications your provider may prescribe help stop your blood vessels from tightening. Others help your kidneys remove salt and water from your blood, and some prevent your heart from pumping too hard. You and your health care provider will decide what's right for you.

Remember that medication can't cure heart disease, but it *can* help control it and decrease your risk of complications. Medication is usually part of your long-term treatment plan. Don't stop taking it without talking to your health care provider!

Source: WebMD

It's Your Health: Speak Up and Listen Up!

Remember that every time you visit your health care provider, it's *your* time to ask questions and get the answers you need to be the healthiest you can be.

- Express any concerns you have about your health.
- Make sure you understand the “whats”—*what* your health problem is, *what* you should do about it, and *what* steps to take next.
- Also ask your provider the “whys.” Sometimes understanding *why* you should do something will help motivate you to do it.
- If you don't understand something, ask your provider to tell you more or to explain it using different words.

If you have questions after you leave your appointment, you can call your health care provider's office. You can usually speak to a nurse or ask to leave a message for your provider. Your provider will call you back.

Source: Institute for Healthcare Improvement



Note: The information in this magazine is not professional medical advice. It is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment. Do not ignore your health care provider's advice or wait to ask for it because of something you read here. Links to other websites are provided as a resource only. PrimeWest Health does not endorse, recommend, or pay for products or services offered by such sites.

1-866-431-0801 (toll free); TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711

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