

## Five Steps You Can Take To Improve Your Heart Health

Dr. Marsh recommends that making these five changes in your lifestyle can greatly improve your heart health. Stay tuned for courses that can help you learn to live with a healthy heart in mind.

1. Change what you eat. Choose a dietary lifestyle that you can live with, not a yo-yo diet. Some popular options with heart health in mind: the Mediterranean diet; the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension); a pescatarian (fish) diet; vegetarian and vegan diets.
2. Don't smoke. If you smoke, you are **almost three times more** likely to die of heart and blood vessel disease (including heart attack and stroke), and compared to people who don't smoke, you are at least three times more likely to die from sudden cardiac death<sup>1</sup>.
3. Get some exercise. According to a review published in *Circulation*, people who engaged in 150 minutes of moderate-intensity leisure activity per week had a **14 percent** lower risk of coronary heart disease than those who reported no exercise. The more you exercise, the lower your risk<sup>2</sup>.
4. Lose extra pounds and watch your waistline. Losing even a small amount of weight if you're overweight or obese can help reduce your blood pressure. In general, you may reduce your blood pressure by **about 1 millimeter of mercury (mm Hg) with each kilogram (about 2.2 pounds) of weight you lose**<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/smoking-and-heart-disease>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/health/heart-disease/exercise#How-Much-Is-Enough?>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/in-depth/high-blood-pressure/art-20046974#:~:text=Lose%20extra%20pounds%20and%20watch%20your%20waistline&text=Losing%20even%20a%20small%20amount,pounds\)%20of%20weight%20you%20lose.](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/in-depth/high-blood-pressure/art-20046974#:~:text=Lose%20extra%20pounds%20and%20watch%20your%20waistline&text=Losing%20even%20a%20small%20amount,pounds)%20of%20weight%20you%20lose.)

5. Avoid alcohol consumption and non-prescription drug use. While previous studies suggested that moderate alcohol consumption, regardless of beverage type, reduced risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) among men and older women<sup>4</sup>, a more recent study suggests that there is no safe amount of drinking<sup>5</sup>, and heavy drinking could lead to heart tissue damage even before concerning symptoms arise. Results of a recent study back previous ones that have shown **too much alcohol intake can increase the risk of heart failure, high blood pressure, heart attack, arrhythmias, stroke, and death**<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://pmj.bmj.com/content/77/914/747>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/04/01/drinking-alcohol-health-effects/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2019/12/18/heavy-drinking-may-cause-heart-damage-before-symptoms-appear#:~:text=Heavy%20drinking%20could%20lead%20to,%2C%20arrhythmias%2C%20stroke%20and%20death.>