



HEALTHY HABITS FOR YOUR HEART

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February is National Heart Month. The World Health Organization reports cardiovascular disease is the number one cause of death worldwide, killing over 17 million people each year. The principles that guide you to a healthy heart are simple, but it takes time and dedication to form healthier habits, and heart disease continues to be a leading cause of death.

The good news is there are a lot of things you can do every day for your heart to avoid becoming a statistic. Keep reading for easy habits to boost your heart health.

EXERCISE

Medcor encourages you to **Move Your Body** for 30 minutes every day. Regular physical activity strengthens the heart muscle and is a great habit for managing weight. Excess weight and obesity are linked to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes which can increase the risk of developing heart disease. Losing weight if you are overweight is one of the best strategies to reduce heart risk.

EAT WELL

Medcor guides you to **Eat Real Food** for your overall health, avoiding ultra-processed foods

with a lot of added sugar and fatty fast foods that lead to plaque buildup in the arteries and obesity. Fill your plate with fruits and vegetables, and for your heart choose lean meats and plant-based foods with healthy (unsaturated) fats. Eating well with regular exercise also helps you maintain a healthy weight to avoid high blood pressure and diabetes.

MANAGE YOUR RISK

To best monitor your heart health, keep track of your weight, cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure. High cholesterol can lead to heart disease and stroke. Sustained high

blood sugar levels can damage your heart and hypertension (high blood pressure) is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Schedule regular tests with your healthcare provider and learn how to check your levels at home.

MANAGE STRESS

Chronic stress has been associated with increased cardiovascular events. Stress is often called the silent killer because if you feel anxious your blood pressure raises, and hypertension can occur for a long time without presenting with obvious symptoms. Everyone experiences stress, but changing your mindset and **Minding Your Happiness** when you feel overwhelmed can make a difference in the health of your mind and your heart. Meditation, volunteering, gratitude, and mindfulness are common tools used to help manage anxiety and negative thoughts that cause stress.

SLEEP WELL

Getting quality, uninterrupted sleep is important because over time, poor sleep

quality can hurt the heart. Medcor promotes **Getting Your Sleep** by practicing good habits like going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, avoiding large meals and alcohol before bed, and lessening screen time before bed. Try reading a book or meditation before bed. Tracking your sleep with a log or journal can help you better assess any patterns in your sleep habits and when and how you get your best sleep.

QUIT SMOKING

Smoking causes damage to your blood vessels and heart but cigarettes are notoriously addictive, and many continue smoking despite the risks. Ask for support, and don't get discouraged if you have a slip-up. At Medcor you can even connect with a wellness coach on Better to get connected to smoking cessation resources.

References

1. [How Does Sleep Affect Your Heart Health? | cdc.gov](#)
2. [American Heart Month | NHLBI, NIH](#)