

Weight Loss Is Dear to the Heart

Genetics that affect your health are set in stone. But lifestyle choices that affect your health are totally within your control, and the choices you make can have a profound influence on how quickly or slowly your heart ages.

An unhealthy body weight translates into higher blood pressure readings, higher cholesterol, and a greater strain on the heart, but weight can be controlled with lifestyle choices, such as how much you choose to exercise and what you choose to eat.

Here are 3 lifestyle choices you should make today, and follow for the rest of your life, to help keep your weight in check, your blood pressure and cholesterol levels under control, and your heart healthy and strong.

1. Say "no" to saturated fat. Foods that are high in saturated fat, trans fats, and cholesterol not only tend to be high in calories, but they also are a recipe for heart attack and stroke. These kinds of fats contribute to thickening of the walls of your arteries via plaque deposits that build up over time. To kick the saturated fat habit, start out gradually. One week, cut down on butter. The next week, pass on fried foods. And the next week, reduce the amount of red meat you eat by half.

2. Wish for more walk time. Do you long for fresh air, a break from the world, a little less stress in your life? A brisk walk around the block can give you this and much more. With a little extra exercise, you'll not only burn excess calories, but also burn off stress -- exercise is a great stress reducer. And reducing stress is a key component of managing your weight, controlling blood pressure and cholesterol, and protecting your heart. A high-stress lifestyle can sabotage appetite control and lead to poor dietary choices, research shows.

3. Seek support. Don't go it alone. Most people benefit greatly from a support network when they are trying to lose weight or manage their weight. Whether your family joins you in your effort to eat healthier or you get a helping hand from a weight loss support group, make sure you have a shoulder to lean on and learn from.

When it comes to controlling cholesterol, lowering blood pressure, and keeping your heart healthy, few lifestyle choices have as much impact as managing your weight -- especially when weight control is the result of smart food choices and a commitment to exercise.

Other Things You Can Do

Prevention is always the best defense against any chronic disease. There are a number of things you can do:

- Don't smoke
- Reduce your intake of sodium
- Drink alcohol only in moderation

In general, good eating habits, regular physical activity and weight management are the keys to preventing many chronic diseases, including high blood pressure. The American Heart Association and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute recommend:

- Increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Decreased consumption of saturated fats and trans fatty acids
- The importance of choosing foods full of the nutrients we need
- The importance of calorie control
- Regular physical activity

**If you would like more information, please contact
Med-Cert, Inc. at 866-633-2378 (toll free) or at www.medcertinc.com**



MED-CERT
Medical Management Resources

Guiding your way to better health management