SHOW YOUR HEART SOME LOVE:
HABITS FOR A HEART-HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Did you know when you choose to live a healthy lifestyle, you can reduce your risk for heart disease by 50 percent? A heart-healthy lifestyle incorporates all aspects of your life to create all-around wellness.

A few adjustments to your everyday activities can kindle a new love for staying heart-healthy.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT FOODS

A heart-healthy diet is naturally low in saturated and trans fats, salt, and added sugar. It's rich in whole grains, fiber, antioxidants, and unsaturated fats. According to the American Heart Association's Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations, you should eat a variety of nutritious foods from all the food groups.

MOVE YOUR BODY

Regular exercise is the key! Find the movement that works for you and do it for 30 minutes, five times a week. Choose activities you enjoy and stay motivated by doing physical activities with a group of friends or family or even with your dog. Mix it up and add something different like yoga, which will benefit your physical, emotional, and mental health.

UNDERSTAND AND CONTROL YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

You can't always _**feel**_ high blood pressure. That's why it's essential to get it checked by your primary care physician and learn about how to manage it. Blood pressure that's high for a long time is one of the main risk factors for heart disease. As you get older, the chances of having ongoing high blood pressure increases.

RELEASE STRESS

Everyone feels and reacts to stress in different ways. Stress may contribute to poor health behaviors linked to an increased risk for heart disease and stroke. Try to find ways to laugh, sit still, and rest. Laughter is a natural medicine; it increases blood flow and helps to manage blood pressure levels. Also, make time for friends and family because maintaining social connections can help relieve stress.

LEARN THE WARNING SIGNS OF A HEART ATTACK AND STROKE

It's essential to know and understand the signs of heart trouble. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach. Shortness of breath can occur with or without chest discomfort. Other possible signs include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

GET YOUR SLEEP

Over time, sleep problems can hurt your heart health. Without enough sleep, your risk of heart disease goes up. "Create a calm, dark, quiet place for sleep. Use your bedroom for sleep – not TV watching, social media, working, texting, or even reading," says Johns Hopkins expert Susheel P. Patil, MD.

(Sources: nih.gov, heartfoundation.org, heart.org, cdc.gov, healthline.com)