

# HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



## Your Heart: Diet, Exercise, and Weight Are Important

If you lower your cholesterol, you can improve your health.

You can lower your cholesterol level with a good diet and exercise. And, if that's not enough, ask your doctor about drugs that may help.

### Diet

Food is a main source of excess fat and cholesterol (cole-es-ter-all—a waxy film that can build up and clog the blood flow) in your body.

If you already have high cholesterol, your doctor may have put you on a diet low in fat and cholesterol.

#### On a diet low in fat and cholesterol, you would:

Eat no more than 6 ounces—about the size of a deck of cards—of cooked lean meat, chicken, or fish a day

Limit the amount of fat you eat—ask your doctor what is right for you

Use very little butter, shortening, or stick margarine

### Read food labels

Choose foods that have no trans fats or are “fat-free,” “low-fat,” and “cholesterol-free.” In your house, get rid of unhealthy foods and replace them with healthy snacks, such as baked tortilla chips, pretzels, fruits and vegetables, pasta, cereals, and low- or non-fat dairy products.

### Exercise

Keep active and keep your heart healthy. Exercise helps lower your “bad” cholesterol. Talk with your doctor to see how to start moving more. For example, walk as often as possible. Take the stairs when you can. Do chores—vacuum, mow the lawn, garden—to be more active.

Work with your doctor to set a goal you can reach—with some effort. Start slowly. Work up to your goal and make exercise a habit.

#### Exercise helps your heart. It also helps you:

Lose weight (which lowers the work for your heart)

Improve your overall health

Be able to do physical things for a longer time

Cut your risk of high blood pressure (that can lead to heart disease!)





# Your Heart: Diet, Exercise, and Weight Are Important

▶ If you want to be healthy, you need to exercise almost every day. Talk with your doctor to find the kind of exercise that's right for you. Then get moving!

## Weight

Together, diet and exercise help control your weight. You don't want to carry extra weight, because it is not healthy.

**You can measure your weight with an accurate scale.**

Check your weight regularly to see if it is what it should be.

**You are overweight if your body mass index (BMI) is 25 or more.**

BMI measures weight based on height.<sup>1</sup> Ask your doctor about your BMI.

If you are overweight, you are more likely to have high blood pressure or diabetes (di-uh-bee-teez – too much sugar in the blood). And those diseases add to your risk of heart disease.

## What if exercise and diet don't work?

When you have too much fat in your body, it changes into LDL cholesterol. HDL, or “good” cholesterol, helps free some of the LDL cholesterol from the arteries, so blood can flow better.

Some people's bodies – because of the way they digest food or because it runs in their family – make too much LDL, or “bad” cholesterol. If you are one of them, diet and exercise may not help you enough. Ask your doctor how low your LDL cholesterol should be.

Then, talk with your doctor about drugs that may help you lower your cholesterol level. Your doctor can help you find a medicine that's right for you.

Get your cholesterol tested on a regular basis so you can track your levels. Your doctor may even need to change your medicine. But don't stop taking it unless your doctor says to.

**Take care of your body and you will be taking care of your heart!**

### References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Defining Overweight and Obesity.” Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/defining.htm>. Accessed April 25, 2007.

