

[IMAGE]

The Big 7 for Heart Health

By Editorial Staff

OK, let's make cardiovascular health simple, particularly if you're getting up there in years and are a bit worried (since heart problems generally take awhile to manifest): The more of these seven health behaviors you adopt, the more likely you are to a) live longer; b) suffer fewer heart attacks and strokes – no matter how old you are. Ignore some (or all), and you could be in trouble. How many of the following are you already doing ... and how many do you need to start doing right away?

1. *Watch the BMI:* Keep your BMI low – ensure your body-mass index is normal for your height weight.
2. *Avoid the Smoke:* Never smoke or have stopped smoking at least 12 months ago (yes, your health improves almost immediately once you stop smoking).
3. *Let's Get Physical:* Exercise vigorously for at least 75 minutes per week or exercise moderately for at least 150 minutes per week.
4. *You Are What You Eat:* Consume a healthy diet including eating fruits / vegetables every day, fish twice or more per week, and less than 450 calories from sugar per week. (1 tablespoon of sugar contains nearly 50 calories, so do the math – that's about 9 tablespoons a week, maximum.)
5. *Keep the BP Down:* Maintain blood pressure below 120 over 80 (systolic over diastolic) without the need for medication to do so.
6. *Level Off Cholesterol:* Maintain a normal cholesterol level, again without relying on medication.
7. *Say No to Sugar:* Maintain normal blood sugar levels without medication.

heart health - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark In a recent study, seniors (average age: 74) who met 3-4 of the above goals had a 16 percent reduced risk of death compared to seniors who met two or less goals, while those achieving 5-7 goals had a 29 percent reduced risk. Overall, death risk decreased 10 percent for each additional goal achieved, while risk of coronary heart disease and stroke fell 22 percent.

The message is simple: Your heart is counting on you! Simple lifestyle choices can make a world of difference in keeping your heart (and thus you) healthy for a lifetime. Talk to your doctor to learn more.

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