

## Physical Wellness

# February is American Heart Month



## February is American Heart Month

You can act to protect yourself against heart disease. Small heart-healthy actions like adding more movement to our day or choosing healthy foods, can have a significant impact on protecting #OurHearts.

Heart disease is a leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women. But you can do a lot to protect your heart and stay healthy.

Heart-healthy living involves understanding your risk, making healthy choices, and taking steps to reduce your chances of getting heart disease, including coronary heart disease, the most common type. By taking preventive measures, you can lower your risk of developing heart disease that could lead to a heart attack. You can also improve your overall health and well-being.

Learn about the steps you can take to live a heart-healthy lifestyle.

The first step toward heart health is understanding your risk of heart disease. Your risk depends on many factors, some of which are changeable and others that are

not. Risk factors are conditions or habits that make a person more likely to develop a disease. These risk factors may be different for each person.

Preventing heart disease starts with knowing what your risk factors are and what you can do to lower them.

## Risk factors for heart disease

- Have high blood pressure
- Have high blood cholesterol
- Have overweight or obesity
- Have prediabetes or diabetes
- Do not get regular physical activity.
- Have a family history of early heart disease, for example if your father or brother was diagnosed before age 55, or your mother or sister was diagnosed before age 65.
- Have a history of pre-eclampsia, which is a sudden rise in blood pressure and too much protein in the urine during pregnancy.
- Have unhealthy eating behaviors.
- Are age 55 or older for women or age 45 or older for men.

Each risk factor increases your chance of developing heart disease. The more risks you have, the higher your overall risk.

Some risk factors cannot be changed. These include your age, sex, and a family history of early heart disease. Many others can be modified. For example, being more physically active and eating healthy are important steps for your heart health. You can make the changes gradually, one at a time. But making them is important.

# Women and heart disease

Women get heart disease about 10 years later than men do, but it is still women's #1 killer. After menopause, women are more likely to get heart disease, in part because estrogen hormone levels drop. Women who have gone through early menopause, either naturally or because they have had a hysterectomy, are twice as likely to develop heart disease as women of the same age who have not gone through menopause. Middle age is also a time when women tend to develop other risk factors for heart disease, such as high blood pressure.

## Questions to ask your provider at your annual checkup

- What is my risk of developing heart disease?
- What is my blood pressure? What does it mean for me, and what do I need to do about it?
- What are my cholesterol numbers? What do they mean for me, and what do I need to do about them?
- What is my body mass index (BMI) and waist measurement? Do I need to lose weight for my health?
- What is my blood sugar level, and does it mean I am at risk for diabetes?
- What other screening tests for heart disease do I need? How often should I return for checkups for my heart health?
- How much physical activity do I need to help protect my heart?
- What is a heart-healthy eating plan for me? Should I see a registered dietitian or qualified nutritionist to learn more about healthy eating?

If you are already being treated for heart disease or heart disease risk factors, discuss your treatment plan with your provider. Ask questions if you do not understand something or need more information. You may want to write down questions before your appointment as well.

## **Annual CHRA (Clinical Health Risk Assessments) and Onsite Biometric Screenings**

- If you are on a Westgate Medical plan, it is time for your required Clinical Health Risk Assessment (CHRA). CHRA and Biometric screenings are required to continue in the Westgate Wellness Program and be eligible for the lower wellness premiums and cash incentives for benefit plan year *June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025*.
- The CHRA is available February 1<sup>st</sup> through February 29th on the UMR website [www.umar.com](http://www.umar.com). Log in and click on the “Take a CHRA” tile.
- On-site biometric screenings will be available on 2/13/2024 – 2/23/2024 dates will vary by properties that are holding these events.
- Contact the Benefits Department if you have additional questions- [benefits@wgresorts.com](mailto:benefits@wgresorts.com)

Science has linked being inactive and sitting too much with higher risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, colon and lung cancers, and early death.

Being more active benefits everyone and helps us live longer, healthier lives.

### **Here are some of the big wins:**

- Lower risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and more!
- Better sleep, including improvements in insomnia and obstructive sleep apnea
- Improved cognition, including memory, attention, and processing speed
- Less weight gain, obesity, and related chronic health conditions
- Better bone health and balance, with less risk of injury from falls
- Fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Better quality of life and sense of overall well-being

## Recommendations for Adults

- Get at least **150 minutes (about 2 and a half hours) per week** of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of both, preferably spread throughout the week.
- Add moderate- to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity (such as resistance or weights) on at least 2 days per week.
- Spend less time sitting. Even light-intensity activity can offset some of the risks of being sedentary.
- Gain even more benefits by being active at least 300 minutes (5 hours) per week.
- Increase amount and intensity gradually over time.

Physical activity is anything that moves your body and burns calories. This includes things like walking, climbing stairs and stretching.

Aerobic (or “cardio”) activity gets your heart rate up and benefits your heart by improving cardiorespiratory fitness. When done at moderate intensity, your heart will beat faster and you will breathe harder than normal, but you will still be able to talk. Think of it as a medium or moderate amount of effort.

### Examples of moderate-intensity aerobic activities:

- brisk walking (at least 2.5 miles per hour)
- water aerobics
- dancing (ballroom or social)
- gardening
- tennis (doubles)
- biking slower than 10 miles per hour

Vigorous intensity activities will push your body a little further. They will require a greater amount of effort. You will get warm and begin to sweat. You will not be able to talk much without getting out of breath.

### Examples of vigorous-intensity aerobic activities:

- hiking uphill or with a heavy backpack
- running
- swimming laps
- vigorous aerobic dancing
- heavy yardwork such as continuous digging or hoeing
- tennis (singles)
- cycling 10 miles per hour or faster
- jumping rope

Knowing your target heart rate can also help you track the intensity of your activities.

For maximum benefits, include both moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity in your routine along with strengthening and stretching exercises.

So, what are you waiting for? Let's get moving!

