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## Sticking With My Medicines— What Will Work?

Taking your blood pressure medicine as directed by your doctor is one of the most important things you can do to manage your high blood pressure.

### **Not taking your medicine as directed by your doctor means:**

- Your medicines may not work the way they should.
- Your blood pressure may go up.
- You may be at risk for serious health problems, like a heart attack or stroke.
- Your blood pressure may become harder to manage.



### “Taking medicines gets in the way of my day.”

Taking more than one medicine at different times each day can be hard. The key is to create a routine that fits your life.

### **Here are some useful tips:**

- Where possible, take your medicines with other daily habits, like in the morning when brushing your teeth or in the evening with dinner.
- Ask if your medicines should be taken with or without food. Talk to your doctor about the best time to take your medicines.

### **If you sometimes forget to take your medicines:**

- Use a pill box marked with the days of the week. Take it with you when you are away from home.
- Wear a watch. Set an alarm. Leave yourself a note on the bathroom mirror.
- Keep your medicine in a place where you will see it daily.
- Fill out a medicine log or calendar. Keep it with you at all times.

### **If you forget to refill your medicine on time:**

- Plan ahead for refills so that you do not run out of your medicine. For example, mark a calendar with “Refill on [date].” Choose a date about a week before you will run out.
- Make sure you have enough refills to last you until your next doctor visit.
- Ask your pharmacy to send you reminders to refill your prescription.



To learn more about what may be getting in the way of taking your medicines, go to [www.takingmeds.com](http://www.takingmeds.com).

# How Can I Manage Stress?

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**Y**ou can have a healthier heart when you make changes in your lifestyle. Managing your emotions better may help, because some people respond to certain situations in ways that can cause health problems for them. For instance, someone feeling pressured by a difficult situation might start smoking or smoke more, overeat and gain weight. Finding more satisfactory ways to respond to pressure will help protect your health.



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## What is stress?

Stress is your body's response to change. It's a very individual thing. A situation that one person finds stressful may not bother someone else. For example, one person may become tense when driving; another person may find driving a source of relaxation and joy. Something that causes fear in some people, such as rock climbing, may be fun for others. There's no way to say that

one thing is "bad" or "stressful" because everyone's different.

Not all stress is bad, either. Speaking to a group or watching a close football game can be stressful, but they can be fun, too. Life would be dull without some stress. The key is to manage stress properly, because unhealthy responses to it may lead to health problems in some people.

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## How does stress make you feel?

- It can make you feel angry, afraid, excited or helpless.
- It can make it hard to sleep.
- It can give you aches in your head, neck, jaw and back.
- It can lead to habits like smoking, drinking, overeating or drug abuse.
- You may not even feel it at all, even though your body suffers from it.

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## How can I cope with it?

Outside events (like problems with your boss, preparing to move or worrying about a child's wedding) can be upsetting. But remember that it's not the outside force, but how you react to it inside that's important. You can't control all the outside events in your life, but you can change how you handle them emotionally and psychologically. Here are some good ways to cope:

- Take 15 to 20 minutes a day to sit quietly, breathe deeply, and think of a peaceful picture.
- Try to learn to accept things you can't change. You don't have to solve all of life's problems. Talk out your troubles and look for the good instead of the bad in situations.

- Engage in physical activity regularly. Do what you enjoy — walk, swim, ride a bike or jog to get your big muscles going.

Letting go of the tension in your body will help you feel a lot better.

- Limit alcohol, don't overeat and don't smoke.

### How can I live a more relaxed life?

- Think ahead about what may upset you. Some things you can avoid. For example, spend less time with people who bother you or avoid driving in rush-hour traffic.
- Think about problems and try to solve them. You could talk to your boss about difficulties at work, talk with your neighbor if

his dog bothers you, or get help when you have too much to do.

- Change how you respond to difficult situations. Be positive, not negative.
- Learn to say "no." Don't promise too much. Give yourself enough time to get things done.

### How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) to learn more about heart disease.

3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

### What are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke?

#### Warning Signs of Heart Attack:

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

#### Warning Signs of Stroke:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

### Do you have questions or comments for your doctor or nurse?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

How can family and friends help?

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# My Doctor Visits— How Can I Get Ready?

*Here are some questions you may ask your doctor or pharmacist.*

- What is the name of the medicine and how will it help me?

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- How and when do I take the medicine, and for how long?

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- When and how do I refill my prescription?

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- What do I do if I miss a dose?

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- Will other nonprescription or prescription medicines affect my lipid-lowering medicine?

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- How will I know if my lipid-lowering medicines are working?

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- What are the possible side effects? What should I do if they occur?

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# Are you overweight? Plan to be healthy!



If you have too much fat — especially around your waist — there is more of a chance you may have health problems. These problems include heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke, and type 2 diabetes.

## Am I overweight?

To see if you are overweight, your doctor may use what is called a Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI compares your height and weight. It shows if you are underweight, at a healthy weight, overweight, or obese.

Your doctor may also measure your waist. Knowing both your BMI and your waist size will tell you if your weight is in a healthy range. It can also help you plan your weight loss goals.

You may be overweight if:	Your BMI (kg/m <sup>2</sup> ) is	Or your waist size is
For a Woman	25 or more	35 inches or more
For a Man	25 or more	40 inches or more

## What can I do?

Eating healthy foods and being more active can help you lose weight and keep it off. Losing just 10-20 pounds can help lower your health risks!

**Eat healthy foods** — Work with your doctor or dietitian to come up with a healthy eating plan.

Your plan should include:

- Foods you like to eat
- Different kinds of food
- The calories and nutrients you need to be healthy

**Be more active** — Work with your doctor to make a plan to get regular physical activity. If your doctor agrees, almost every day you should get at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, like taking a brisk walk. This 30 minutes of exercise does not need to be done all at one time. Being a little active is better than not being active at all.

If you think you may be overweight, talk to your doctor about a plan to be healthier.

# Be more active... for heart health!



## Make activity a heart-healthy habit

If you have or are at risk for heart disease, you may need to be more active. Physical activity may help you keep from getting heart disease, delay its onset, or even improve your condition. But before starting an exercise program, talk to your doctor about what level of activity is right for you.

For many people, your goal should be 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise on most or all days. Getting into this heart-healthy habit may be easier than you think! You can:

- Walk a mile in 15 minutes
- Ride a bicycle
- Play tennis
- Take exercise classes
- Do housework or yard work

## Work up to your goal

After you and your doctor agree what level of exercise is right for you:

- Start with 10 minutes a day, 3 days a week.
- Slowly increase to at least 30 minutes every day.
- If you cannot get 30 minutes all at once, break your activity into smaller time periods.
- Set aside time to be active.
- Choose an activity you enjoy, and keep doing it.

## Think of ways to be more active

### If you often...

Read a magazine during your lunch break

Search for the closest parking space

Take the elevator

Sit at the kitchen table and talk with a friend

Watch TV from your chair or couch

### Try this instead...

Take a walk

Choose a parking space far away from the entrance

Take the stairs

Take a walk with your friend

Ride a stationary bike or walk in place

You may want to track your progress to see how well you are doing. This may help you stay with your program.

This information is not meant to replace your doctor's advice.  
Be sure to talk with your doctor about what activities are safe for you.  
Ask about healthy eating and other heart-healthy changes you can make.

# Wellness Checklist for Adults\*

To stay healthy, it's important to get the care you need. This chart tells you what exams, tests, and vaccines you need and when to get them. It will help you make sure you are doing what you can to help protect your health.

## For each section on the chart:

1. Read the "Recommendations" box.
2. Write down the date of your last exam, test, or vaccine in the "Date Completed and Results" box.
3. Place a check mark in the "Action Needed" box if you need to follow up.

Then, call your healthcare provider to follow up on any actions you need to take.

**Remember to take this wellness checklist to your appointment.**

	Recommendations	Date Completed and Results	Action Needed
<b>Blood Pressure (BP)<sup>1</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check at least every 2 years</li> </ul> <i>Check more often if your BP is high</i>	Date: _____ Reading: _____ My BP goal: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Cholesterol<sup>2,3</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting at age 20, check at least every 5 years</li> </ul> <i>Check more often if your cholesterol is high</i>	Date: _____ Results: _____ My cholesterol goal: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Colon Cancer Screening<sup>4</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stool sample test every year</li> </ul> <i>Starting at age 50, get a colonoscopy every 10 years</i> <i>Ask your healthcare provider if you are at higher risk or if you need earlier and additional tests</i>	Date: _____ Results: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Eyes<sup>5</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a baseline exam between ages 20 and 29</li> </ul> <i>Get follow-up exams as often as your eye doctor recommends</i>	Date of last complete eye exam: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>General Preventive Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep an ongoing relationship with a healthcare provider and get the care you need</li> </ul>	Date of last physical: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Vaccines</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tetanus-diphtheria<sup>5</sup></li> <li>• Flu (influenza)<sup>6</sup></li> <li>• Travel to another country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every 10 years (may need booster vaccine after an injury)</li> <li>• Every year for people who are over 50 or at high risk</li> <li>• Ask your healthcare provider 1 to 2 months before leaving for another country</li> </ul> <i>Ask your healthcare provider about new vaccines or recommendations</i>	Date of last vaccine: _____  Date of last vaccine: _____  Are you going to another country? Yes___No___	<input type="checkbox"/>   <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Skin<sup>7</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check yourself for any spots, sores, and moles</li> </ul> <i>See your healthcare provider if you're not sure about anything you find</i>	Do every month	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Teeth<sup>8,9</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get an exam and cleaning every 6 months</li> <li>• Brush twice a day and floss once a day</li> </ul>	Date of last exam and cleaning: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

\*Guidelines for children may differ. Please ask your healthcare provider for more information.

# For Women Only

Recommendations	Date Completed and Results	Action Needed
<b>Breast Self-exam<sup>10</sup></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starting at age 20, check your breasts for lumps, dimpling, or discharge</li> </ul> <i>See your healthcare provider if you're not sure about anything you find</i>	Do every month	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mammogram<sup>10</sup></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every year starting at age 40</li> </ul> <i>Earlier if you are at higher risk for breast cancer</i> <i>Speak with your healthcare provider to see if you are at higher risk</i>	Date of last mammogram: _____ Results: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Pelvic Exam With Pap Test<sup>10</sup></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three years after you start having vaginal intercourse or no later than age 21</li> <li>Every 1 to 3 years as directed by your healthcare provider</li> </ul>	Date of last exam with Pap test: _____ Results: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

# For Men Only

Recommendations	Date Completed and Results	Action Needed
<b>Prostate Cancer Screening<sup>10</sup></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every year starting at age 50</li> </ul> <i>Earlier if you are at higher risk for prostate cancer</i> <i>Speak with your healthcare provider to see if you are at higher risk</i>	Date of last exam: _____ Results: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Testicular Self-exam<sup>11</sup></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optional, but once a month if you have risk factors</li> </ul> <i>Ask your healthcare provider if you have risk factors</i> <i>See your healthcare provider if you're not sure about anything you find</i>	Do every month	<input type="checkbox"/>

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