Be one in a MILLION HEARTS®
Preventing 1 million heart attacks and strokes over 5 years

Bulletin inserts

Million Hearts – ABCS

The goal of the Million Hearts project is to prevent one million heart attacks and strokes by 2022. Million Hearts has tools that help Americans make healthier choices. Million Hearts is also focusing on improving the quality of care. It does this through four steps known as the ABCS: aspirin for people at risk, blood pressure control, cholesterol control and quitting smoking. The next time you see your doctor, talk about your heart health and the ABCS that affect you.

Heart Disease, Stroke and Cardiovascular Disease

Heart disease is a term that describes a group of heart conditions. The most common type of heart disease in the U.S. is coronary artery disease. Having coronary artery disease can lead to heart problems like heart attack, chest pain, heart failure and irregular heartbeat.

A stroke happens when a clot or broken blood vessel blocks blood from flowing to the brain. Brain damage received during a stroke is sometimes reversible, but often can be permanent.

Cardiovascular disease describes all diseases that affect the heart or blood vessels, including heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure and coronary artery disease. There are risk factors for heart and blood vessel disease that cannot be controlled, like age, race and gender. However, there are many factors that can change, like high cholesterol, smoking, exercise, obesity and high blood pressure. Talk with your doctor about your own risk for heart disease, stroke, and heart and blood vessel disease.

Aspirin Use

You should also ask your doctor if taking a daily aspirin is right for you. In addition to pain relief, aspirin may prevent heart disease and stroke. There are both benefits and risks in taking aspirin. It can
reduce swelling from heart disease, stop blood clots and reduce risk of death in heart patients and in the elderly. It can also lower your risk of heart damage if you do have a heart attack. However, a daily aspirin can also lead to ulcers and internal bleeding. And if you do have a stroke, aspirin can increase your risk of bleeding in the brain. Some people should take a daily aspirin, including those with coronary artery disease, anyone who has had a heart attack or stroke and those who have had bypass surgery. Some people should not take aspirin every day because of their history or possible side effects when aspirin reacts with other drugs. That’s why you should always talk to your doctor before you take aspirin every day.

**Blood Pressure**

Blood pressure is a term that describes how hard blood pushes against artery walls. Blood pressure is measured with two numbers. Systolic pressure measures when the heart beats. That’s the top number of a blood pressure reading. Diastolic pressure measures when the heart relaxes between beats. That’s the bottom number on a blood pressure reading. A normal top number is usually less than 120, while a normal bottom number is usually less than 80. High blood pressure happens when either of the two numbers is higher than normal. That causes the heart to work harder than it usually would, which can lead to heart disease, kidney disease, stroke and blindness. You can control high blood pressure by staying at a healthy weight, exercising, eating a healthy diet, only drinking a moderate amount of alcohol, taking blood pressure drugs and quitting smoking. Taking care of high blood pressure can lower your risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

**Cholesterol**

Cholesterol is a fatty substance that is in your blood. Cholesterol comes from food and from your liver. We need some cholesterol to live, but too much can build up in your blood vessels and block blood flow. There are two forms of cholesterol, called LDL and HDL. LDL is the “bad” cholesterol. This is the kind that clogs your arteries and increases your risk for heart attack and stroke. HDL is the “good” cholesterol. HDL helps your body get rid of bad cholesterol. You want your LDL to stay under 100 mg/dL, and you want your HDL to stay above 60 mg/dL. When you get your cholesterol checked, the number your doctor tells you is your LDL added to your HDL, plus 20 percent of your triglyceride level. A normal total cholesterol level is under 200 mg/dL. You should have your cholesterol checked every year.
If your cholesterol is at an unhealthy level, talk with your doctor about lowering it. Lowering your cholesterol also lowers your risk for heart attack or stroke.

**Quitting Smoking**

Quitting smoking is a major step in lowering your risk for cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and heart and blood vessel disease. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable deaths in the world. If you use tobacco, calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) can be the most important call you make. The Quitline offers free support from a Quit Coach®, Web Coach™ access through an online community, a plan to help you stop smoking and tools like nicotine patches. The Quitline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is free and confidential. You can get started by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

**Lower Sodium, Increase Potassium**

If you have high blood pressure, your doctor has probably told you to cut the amount of salt you eat. The American Heart Association says nearly 98 percent of Americans eat more than twice as much sodium as they should. High sodium raises blood pressure by increasing the amount of fluid in your blood. Potassium helps your heart by taking sodium out of your body. It also relaxes your blood vessels, which also helps lower blood pressure. Foods high in potassium are important to any heart-healthy diet. If your blood pressure is high, or you are at risk for high blood pressure, talk to your doctor about adding more potassium to your diet. However, you can start cutting sodium from your diet today.

- Read nutrition labels. Choose foods with 5 percent or less of the recommended daily value of sodium. Avoid foods with 20 percent or more.
- Track sodium in your food. Make sure you are eating less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium each day.
- Limit or avoid canned foods, processed foods, lunch meats and fast foods. These all have a high sodium content.
- Replace salt with salt-free seasonings when you cook.
- Add potassium-rich foods to your diet. These include potatoes and sweet potatoes, greens, mushrooms, lima beans, peas, bananas, tomatoes, oranges, melons, grapefruit, yogurt and raisins.
**DASH Diet**

The DASH Diet is a meal plan that is low in saturated fat, cholesterol, total fat and sodium. DASH stands for “Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension (high blood pressure)”. DASH focuses on eating fruits, vegetables and fat-free or low-fat milk. DASH also encourages people to eat whole grains, fish, poultry and nuts, while cutting red meat, sweets and sweetened drinks. Foods included in DASH can help lower blood pressure. These foods are rich in potassium, calcium, magnesium, protein and fiber. DASH has been shown to help lower blood pressure within two weeks. You can find more on the DASH diet at [https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan). Be sure to talk to your doctor about whether this diet is right for you.

**Living in the Stroke Belt**

The “stroke belt” is a group of states in the southeastern United States where strokes are most common. Doctors are still studying why strokes happen more often here, although the region does have higher levels of obesity, diabetes and heart disease. All of these diseases can increase your risk of having a stroke.

It is important to know all of the warning signs of a stroke. These include sudden onset of any of these problems: numbness or weakness in the face, arm or leg (especially on one side of the body); trouble speaking or understanding; trouble seeing in one or both eyes; trouble walking, dizziness or loss of balance; severe headache with no known cause.

To help you decide if someone is having a stroke, use the FAST acronym.
- F – Face. If a person smiles, does one side of their face droop?
- A – Arms. When a person raises both arms, does one arm slouch downward?
- S – Speech. When a person repeats a simple phrase, is his or her speech slurred?
- T – Time. This is critical for treating a stroke. If you see any signs of stroke, call 911 immediately.

You can find more information on the symptoms and warning signs of a stroke at [www.stroke.org/site/PageServer?pagename=symp](http://www.stroke.org/site/PageServer?pagename=symp).
MyPlate – Dietary Guidelines

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) must update the Dietary Guidelines for Americans every five years. The USDA launched ChooseMyPlate.gov in 2011 to promote dietary guidelines. You can find all this information at www.choosemyplate.gov.