



American Heart Association  
**Healthy for Good™**

# Life's Essential 8



Improving and maintaining cardiovascular health, or CVH, can help you enjoy a longer, healthier life. Better CVH also has been associated with decreased risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, dementia and other major health problems.

**Life's Essential 8 outlines a few easy steps you can take to live a healthier lifestyle.**

## ✓ EAT BETTER

Aim for an overall healthy eating pattern that includes whole foods, lots of fruits and vegetables, lean protein, nuts, seeds and cooking in non-tropical oils such as olive and canola.

## ✓ MANAGE WEIGHT

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight has many benefits. Body mass index (BMI), a numerical value of your weight in relation to your height, is a useful gauge. Optimal BMI for most adults ranges from 18.5 to less than 25. You can calculate it online or consult a health care professional.

## ✓ BE MORE ACTIVE

Adults should participate in 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity. Walking is great for moderate levels of activity. Kids should have 60 minutes every day, including play and structured activities.

## ✓ CONTROL CHOLESTEROL

High levels of non-HDL, or "bad," cholesterol can lead to heart disease. Your health care professional can consider non-HDL cholesterol as the preferred number to monitor, rather than total cholesterol, because it can be measured without fasting beforehand and is reliably calculated among all people.

## ✓ QUIT TOBACCO

Use of inhaled nicotine delivery products, which includes traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes and vaping, is the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., including about a third of all deaths from heart disease. And about a third of U.S. children ages 3-11 are exposed to secondhand smoke or vaping.

## ✓ MANAGE BLOOD SUGAR

Most of the food we eat is turned into glucose (or blood sugar) that our bodies use as energy. Over time, high levels of blood sugar can damage your heart, kidneys, eyes and nerves. As part of testing, monitoring hemoglobin A1c can better reflect long-term control in people with diabetes or prediabetes.

## ✓ GET HEALTHY SLEEP

Getting a good night's sleep every night is vital to cardiovascular health. Adults should aim for an average of 7-9 hours, and babies and kids need more depending on their age. Too little or too much sleep is associated with heart disease, studies show.

## ✓ MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE

Keeping your blood pressure within acceptable ranges can keep you healthier longer. Levels less than 120/80 mm Hg are optimal. High blood pressure is defined as 130-139 mm Hg systolic pressure (the top number in a reading) or 80-89 mm Hg diastolic pressure (bottom number).

**Learn more at [heart.org/lifes8](https://heart.org/lifes8)**