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Be Good to Your Heart

Simple lifestyle changes can make a big impact when it comes to heart health. Show your heart some love with these 10 tips.

1. **Stop smoking:** Quitting smoking is the best lifestyle change that you can make for your heart and overall health. Quitting is never easy but there are resources that can help you kick the nicotine habit.

2. **Know your numbers:** Maintaining a healthy weight, blood pressure and total cholesterol play a significant role in heart health. Schedule an appointment with your primary health provider for a screening.

3. **Screen for diabetes:** Diabetes can be easily detected through a simple blood test and then managed a variety of ways under the care of a physician.

4. **Get active:** Heart-pumping physical activity not only helps in decreasing cardiovascular disease but can improve all mental and physical health. The American Heart Association recommends five 30-minute moderate exercise sessions each week. Walking, jogging, biking and swimming are all great forms of exercise.*

5. **Build some muscle:** Strength training complements cardiovascular health by toning muscles and burning fat. Proper strength training can improve daily functional movement and decrease your risk of injury. The American Heart Association recommends two days of moderate- to high-intensity strength training each week.*

6. **Eat smart:** A healthy diet of heart-smart foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains is essential to a healthy heart and lifestyle.

7. **Limit junk food:** To reap the full benefits of a heart-healthy diet, it's important to limit intake of nutrient-poor junk foods. Added sugars, saturated fat and excessive sodium are bad for your heart and overall health.

8. **Stress less:** Stress increases cortisol, which can lead to weight gain. In addition, stress can lead to other unhealthy habits, making it harder to stick to a heart-healthy program.

9. **Sleep more:** Sleeping restores the body, helps decrease stress and increases overall happiness. A calming bedtime routine and going to bed and waking at the same time each day are all great ways to establish healthy sleep patterns.

10. **Smile:** A happy heart is a healthy heart. Making time for enjoyable activities and hobbies helps relieve stress and improves your overall mood, providing a solid foundation for a heart-healthy lifestyle.

Before starting any exercise or strength-training program, consult your physician or other qualified health provider regarding your medical condition.

Sources: American Heart Association, bioiQ.com

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