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HEART HEALTH

Easy Ways to Monitor Your Heart's Health

Wearable health devices have become popular in recent years. From smart phone apps to heart rate monitors, we can collect biometric data for just about anything.

Monitoring your heart's health allows you to make better decisions about your lifestyle habits. Metrics take the guesswork out of managing conditions like diabetes, hypertension, and kidney disease. By reviewing your health data regularly, you can recognize changes in your health earlier and make necessary adjustments to avoid further complications.

Here are some ways you can monitor your heart's health:

Check your cholesterol

Are your lab values up to date? Make sure to monitor your health-related lab values regularly.

Take your blood pressure

Is your blood pressure within the normal range for you? Check your blood pressure periodically to make sure there are no concerns. Ask your healthcare provider what your blood pressure target should be.

Monitor your heart rate

Are you exercising within your target heart rate zone? Many heart rate monitors can give you real-time feedback about whether you are exercising within your target heart rate zone. Always consult with your physician before making significant changes to your exercise routine.

Check your blood sugar

Are your blood sugar levels within normal ranges? Even if you do not have a diagnosis like diabetes, you can monitor your blood sugar values occasionally to make sure there are no changes. High blood sugars can make blood vessels sticky, which can cause fats to build up and limit blood flow.

Time your exercise

Are you including enough cardiovascular exercise? Experts recommend accumulating at least 150 minutes of physical activity every week. Use an app, pedometer, or fitness tracker to keep tabs on your exercise habits.

Remember to consult with your doctor to see how often you should be monitoring your heart-related metrics.





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Fighting Inflammation with Food

Inflammation is your body's natural response to an infection or injury. Sometimes it shows up in visible forms, such as with pain, redness, and swelling, but sometimes it is less visible, causing damage slowly and silently.

Unlike acute inflammation, which occurs only briefly, chronic inflammation tends to linger. Ongoing inflammation has been shown to play a key role in many health conditions like diabetes, [arthritis](#)¹, cancer, asthma, allergies, heart disease, and even Alzheimer's disease. Chronic inflammation has also been linked to carrying excess body weight, smoking, and being physically inactive.

In recent years, it has been discovered that specific foods play a role in inflammation. Foods that are known to trigger inflammation include soda, high-fat red meat, hydrogenated fats like shortening, and highly processed foods. In contrast, plant-based foods that are high in antioxidants and phytochemicals have been shown to possess anti-inflammatory properties.



Here are some healthy anti-inflammatory foods to consider including in your menu rotation:

Herbs & Spices

While we generally think of herbs and spices as flavorings, many contain beneficial antioxidants. For example, turmeric contains curcumin, a phytochemical that has been [shown](#)² to reduce inflammation by inhibiting mediators like cytokines.

Nuts

[Studies](#)³ have shown an association between higher consumption of tree nuts and reduced inflammatory biomarkers, like C-reactive protein (CRP).

Green Tea

Green tea, which contains polyphenol compounds called catechins, have been [shown](#)⁴ to possess anti-inflammatory properties that are protective against cardiovascular disease.

Green Leafy Vegetables

Green leafy vegetables are known to be high in magnesium, a mineral that has been [shown](#)⁵ to have an inverse relationship with inflammation.

Fish

Fatty fish, like salmon, trout, and mackerel, are higher in omega-3 fatty acids that have been [found](#)⁶ to be cardioprotective.



To help reduce or prevent chronic inflammation, choose a wide variety nutrient-dense foods that have anti-inflammatory properties.

1. <https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/healthy-living/nutrition/anti-inflammatory/anti-inflammatory-diet>

2. <https://pi.oregonstate.edu/mic/dietary-factors/phytochemicals/curcumin>

3. https://academic.oup.com/ajcn/article/104/3/722/4564733?itm_medium=sidebar&itm_content=ajcn&itm_source=trendmd-widget&itm_campaign=trendmd-pilot

4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2748751/>

5. <http://www.doils.net/v1/links/256634.pdf>

6. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Michelle_Krahe/publication/23445016_Anti-inflammatory_and_cardioprotective_effects_of_n-3_polyunsaturated_fatty_acids_and_plant_sterols_in_hyperlipidemic_individuals/links/5b556441aca27217ffb32725/Anti-inflammatory-and-cardioprotective-effects-of-n-3-polyunsaturated-fatty-acids-and-plant-sterols-in-hyperlipidemic-individuals.pdf



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How Getting Better Sleep Can Protect Your Heart

Sleep is something you may not think too much about unless you struggle to get enough of it. Lack of consistent, restful sleep has been linked to obesity in numerous studies, and sleep deprivation also poses some risks when it comes to cardiovascular health.

Experts recommend⁷ that most adults get at least seven hours of sleep each day. Evidence⁸ suggests that getting less than six hours of sleep each night over a period of years could contribute to cardiovascular disease, especially in women. Not getting enough sleep has been associated with coronary artery calcification, as well as poor decision-making when it comes to food choices. For these reasons, getting enough sleep is critical for heart health.

To get better sleep, try these easy tips:

Set a bedtime alarm

Do you have a tendency to stay up too late? Try setting a bedtime alarm to maintain a more consistent sleep schedule.

Use earplugs

If you are easily distracted by noises and have trouble falling asleep, try using earplugs when you sleep.

Meditate

Meditating before bed can help you relieve tension, calm your mind, and prepare you for sleep.

Use aromatherapy

Essential oils can be particularly helpful when it comes to relaxing in the evening. As an experiment, try placing a few drops of lavender essential oil on your pillow at night.

Drink some tea

Enjoy a cup of herbal tea before bed. Most herbal teas contain less caffeine than black or oolong varieties.

Simply put, getting sufficient restful sleep on a regular basis can help protect your heart.



7. https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about_sleep/how_much_sleep.html

8. <https://www.acc.org/about-acc/press-releases/2019/01/14/13/57/sleeping-less-than-six-hours-a-night-may-increase-cardiovascular-risk>



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RECIPE

Rosemary-Scented Veggie Stack

INGREDIENTS

- 4 portabella mushrooms, gills scraped off
- 1 sweet yellow onion, sliced into ¼-inch thick rings
- 1 red, yellow, or orange bell pepper, sliced into quarters lengthwise
- Balsamic vinegar
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary, leaves removed from stem and chopped
- ½ cup reduced fat goat cheese
- 4 whole grain hamburger buns

Total Time (Cook and Prep):

30 minutes

Servings: 4



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Oil the grates of a grill or grill pan. Heat grill on medium-high.
2. Place a small saucepan on the grill and fill with ½ cup balsamic vinegar. Allow vinegar to come to a boil and reduce until it's a syrup.
3. Place the mushrooms bottom-side up on the grill. Place the remaining vegetables on the grill. Pour 1 tbs. balsamic vinegar and ¼ tsp. rosemary into each of the mushrooms.
4. Cook vegetables about 4-5 minutes. Turn over onion and bell pepper and cook an additional 5 minutes.

NUTRITION INFO

(per serving)

Calories <i>kcal</i>	169
Carbs <i>g</i>	28
Fat <i>g</i>	4
Protein <i>g</i>	9
Sodium <i>mg</i>	0
Sugar <i>g</i>	0

Source:

<https://urockgirl.com/your-two-new-favorite-burger-alternatives/>



Wellbeing Activity

Keep a Health Log

Use an app, spreadsheet, or journal to log your heart health metrics. You may want to reference some of your old lab values from past doctor's visits to uncover trends over time. Below are some numbers you may choose to monitor:

- Blood Pressure
- Body Weight
- Heart Rate
- Cholesterol
- HDL
- LDL
- Cardiovascular exercise minutes
- Blood Sugar

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ANTI-INFLAMMATORY FOODS TO CONSIDER INCLUDING IN YOUR MENU ROTATION:

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GREEN TEA

Possess anti-inflammatory properties that are protective against cardiovascular disease.

GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLES

High in magnesium, a mineral that has been shown to have an inverse relationship with inflammation.

FISH

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YOUR WELLBEING ACTIVITY

KEEP A HEALTH LOG

Use an app, spreadsheet, or journal to log your heart health metrics.



Employer Completion Form

I, _____ successfully completed the **Health Log** Wellbeing Activity by:

Signed,

Date
