

# Men's Heart Health: What You Can Do To Improve It

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for most males regardless of their racial or ethnic group in the United States. However, it doesn't have to be. Many heart disease-related deaths are preventable. Simple changes in health habits, such as stopping smoking, more physical activity, and less salt in the diet, and community changes that create healthier living spaces, such as safe places to exercise and smoke-free areas, can save lives.

## Learn Heart Attack Warning Signs

Alert men on how to respond to a heart attack by telling them about the National Heart Attack Alert Program's major heart attack signs:

- **Chest pain or discomfort**—Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center or left side of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. The discomfort can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body**—Can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath**—Often comes along with chest discomfort, but it also can occur before chest pains.
- **Other symptoms**—May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.



## Did You Know?

Heart disease takes **one in every four** men's lives.

For **Asian-American** or **Pacific-Islander men**, heart disease is **second only to cancer**.

As of 2007, **African-American men** were **30 percent more likely to die** from **heart disease** than were non-Hispanic white men.

## Follow Dietary Tips

Aiming for a low-salt, low-saturated fat diet can be a challenge. Here are a few suggestions to help:

### Set small meal goals:

- Limit the canned goods you eat, except those labeled "low sodium."
- Mostly choose fresh or frozen foods.
- Take the skin off of chicken or turkey before eating.
- Cook with healthy oil (olive, canola, or safflower).

### Avoid foods high in salt:

- Skip processed foods and meats not labeled "low sodium"; examples: bacon, salami.
- Avoid potato chips, popcorn, or salted nuts.
- Stay away from fast-food meals high in salt.

### Options for cooking at home:

- Don't add salt when the food is cooking. Salt to taste or not at all.
- Switch to garlic powder, herbs, and onions.

## How Medical Providers Can Help

- Use electronic health records to identify and support patients who need help quitting smoking or who have high blood pressure or high cholesterol.
- Refer patients to community resources, such as smoking cessation and blood pressure self-management programs.
- Track patient progress on the ABCS (appropriate Aspirin Therapy, Blood pressure control, Cholesterol management, and Smoking cessation) of heart health.



For more tools and resources, go to the American Heart Association's **Check.Change. Control.** program website at <http://bit.ly/1Q3C8I8>