

Waistline: I keep my waist circumference below 35 inches (for women) or below 40 inches (for men). Excess belly fat raises heart disease risk.

Power moved: stay physically active and get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise weekly. Examples: routine brisk walks, a dance class or cardio machine workouts.

Numbers game: know my blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose and triglyceride levels through regular checks by my health care provider. Maintaining optimal levels is critical to heart health.

Positive food: I enjoy a diet rich in fresh produce, whole grains and lean protein sources (fish, beans, lean meats) to help fight arterial disease and unwanted weight gain.

Yes for nutrition: I rarely eat refined grains or processed foods. These products (e.g., low-fiber, high-sugar foods and preserved meats) remove many healthful components in the original food sources.

I don't smoke: Smoking significantly raises the risk of heart disease and diabetes by damaging the blood vessels and raising blood pressure and heart rate.

I laugh a lot. It feels good and relieves stress and depression. Laughter helps lower stress hormones and artery inflammation and increase HDL (good) cholesterol, says the American Heart Association.

It's never too late to be heart smart for you and your family.



