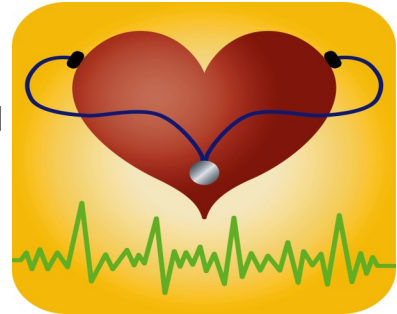


## Easy Steps to A Healthy Heart

Here are a few tips to keep your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers in your target range:



### Be More Active

Exercise can lower your blood pressure while boosting your HDL (good) cholesterol level. **Walking, biking, or doing other physical activity for about 30 minutes each day can make a big difference in your heart health.** Being active also makes it easier to manage your weight, gives you more energy, helps you cope with stress and helps you sleep better. Exercise can even help to prevent depression and lower your risk for Alzheimer's disease. Eventually, you might even be able to ask your doctor about reducing your medication as you improve your cholesterol level.

**A great way to begin a walking routine is to invite a friend or your Aker Kasten Home Health specialist to walk with you several times each week.** This will help insure your safety and provide a companion to share some conversation along the walk!

### Aim for A Healthy Weight

If you have diabetes, you may already know losing weight helps to manage blood glucose by lowering insulin resistance. In other words, when you lose weight, your body can use insulin more easily, which in turns means better glucose readings. But you may not know **losing weight is one of the most effective things you can do to lower your blood pressure.** It can also help decrease the burden on your heart and your joints. You don't have to lose a lot of weight to reap health benefits: losing just 7-10 % of your body weight can lead to improved glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol levels. **Aker Kasten Home Health specialists are available to prepare heart healthy meals and snacks for you to enjoy.**

### Eat More Fiber

**Eating more fiber can help to lower your cholesterol level and blood glucose.** Fiber is found in vegetables, fruits, beans and whole-grain breads and cereals. Foods high in fiber also help you feel full more quickly, which can help in your weight-loss efforts.

## **Eat Less Saturated Fat**

Saturated fat is solid at room temperature and is found in foods such as bacon and shortening. Both saturated fat and trans fat, a type of fat found in some processed foods, can raise your LDL (bad) cholesterol level. **Eating less of these types of fats and switching to more heart-healthy fats, such as olive and canola oils, can lower your LDL level.** Fat is also very dense in calories. In fact, there are twice as many calories in a gram of fat as there are in a gram of carbohydrate or protein. Eating less fat is an effective way to cut calories and lose weight, which can help lower your blood pressure too!

## **Learn All You Can About Heart Disease**

Learning more about your condition will help you feel less stressed and more in control. Learn how heart health affects you personally, such as what you can do to improve your future health and when to call your health care team. If your health care provider does not have time to explain it fully, ask if you can set a special time to talk about it. Or, ask if there is someone else with whom you could meet or a health education program you can attend. **Aker Kasten's Staff Nurse or Director of Nursing can also be a great resource for you as you try to implement healthier habits!**

~adapted from *Walgreens Heart Health & You*, Spring 2011.