

Your Heart Health: Questions to Ask Your Doctor

If you have concerns about your heart, it is important to first talk with your primary care provider who will see you for routine preventive health care, including physical exams and basic tests.

Your physician plays a key role in helping to manage your overall health including certain problems involving the heart and blood vessels - such as high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol that is successfully treated with medication. If your heart problems are more complicated, your physician may refer you to a cardiologist for testing and evaluation or for ongoing care.

Use this helpful list of questions to have a conversation with your physician and get the answers you need. Getting informed is the first step to getting healthy.

Overall Heart Health

- What are my risk factors for heart disease and stroke? How can I lower my risk?
- What are the warning signs of heart disease and stroke?
- If you're a woman, ask, "What should I know about the effects of menopause on my health?"

Understanding Heart Disease

- What are the symptoms of coronary artery disease and how is it diagnosed?
- How do you treat coronary artery disease?
- Can you give me easy-to-read fact sheets on my condition and recommend some websites with the right information on heart disease?

Understanding Your Medications

- What is the name of the medicine and what is the medicine supposed to do?
- How and when do I take it, and for how long?
- What foods, drinks, other medicines or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?

Quitting Cigarettes and Tobacco

- What can I do to stop the cravings and how long will they last?
- Can I take a smoking cessation medication? What about a nicotine patch or gum?

Eating Right

- What kinds of foods should I eat and what should I avoid?
- Should I restrict my calories, fat intake, or salt intake to a certain level?
- Do I need to see a nutritionist or dietitian? If so, can you recommend one?

Losing Weight

- Why are weight control and regular physical activity important?
- Do I need to lose weight? If so, how much and how fast?
- Once I lose the weight, how do I keep it off?

Physical Activity

- Why is regular physical activity important?
- Can I exercise? Play sports? Can I have sex?
- What are the best types of activities for me?

Understanding Your Blood Pressure

- What is my blood pressure and is it at a healthy level?
- What is high blood pressure, and what causes it?
- Will I need to take blood pressure medicine? Will I always need to take it?

Understanding Your Cholesterol

- What is my blood cholesterol, and is it at a healthy level?
- What do my cholesterol numbers mean?
- How often should I have my levels checked?
- Will I need cholesterol-lowering medicine?

Adapted from material provided by the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology.

If you do not have a primary care provider, HealthLink, a free, confidential resource can help you find one. They can also assist with insurance questions, physician office hours, and locations. Contact HealthLink at (231) 935-5886, toll free at 1-800-533-5520 or [search online](#).



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