

# Your Heart Health Checklist For 2009

Submitted by: Healthy Direct

Friday, 6 February 2009

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Take a look at how to keep your heart healthy

(<http://www.healthydirect.com/article/HeartHealthChecklist/d.jsf>) and avoid becoming a statistic of heart disease.

Give up smoking

Toxins in cigarette smoke fur-up the arteries making heart attacks more likely, so don't smoke! Avoid passive smoking too as this increases the risk of heart disease in non-smokers by around a third. After fifteen years of being an ex-smoker, the risk of a heart attack is back to the same as for someone who has never smoked, so it's never too late to stop.

Get the balance of alcohol right

One or two units of alcohol a day may help to keep the heart healthy by making blood clots less likely and increasing good cholesterol levels. These benefits are believed to be after the menopause for women and from around the age of forty for men.

Up your omega 3 levels

Omega 3 (<http://www.healthydirect.com/category/Category-OmegaOils/d.jsf>) essential fatty acids from oily fish (at least one portion a week) or a supplement (such as cod liver oil (<http://www.healthydirect.com/product/COD1K/d.jsf>)) help regulate heart rhythm, prevent blood from clotting, and lower triglyceride fat levels. Being anti-inflammatory, omega 3s also make fatty plaques less likely to rupture and cause heart attacks.

Keep active

Inactivity directly increases the risk of heart disease. Keep active doing whatever feels comfortable and is enjoyable. Brisk walking, swimming and dancing are good ones to try. Aim for thirty minutes of moderately intensive activity at least five days a week.

Enjoy the benefits of garlic

Allicin in garlic (<http://www.healthydirect.com/product/GAR1K/d.jsf>) helps relax blood vessels allowing better blood flow. Garlic may also help lower cholesterol, make blood clots less likely and lower blood pressure, all of which help keep the heart healthy. Added to cooking as a healthy seasoning or taken each day as a supplement, garlic is one to go for.

Enjoy some health food

A low-fat, low-salt diet that's rich in fruit, vegetables and fibre will help keep the heart in tip top condition by helping keep cholesterol and blood pressure at healthy levels. For dietary insurance,

consider a supplement that contains multivitamins (<http://www.healthydirect.com/product/MVAZM/d.jsf>) and minerals.

#### Watch your weight

Carrying extra weight increases the risk of heart disease and diabetes, particularly if it's around your middle. Losing weight may not be easy, but it is possible. With a healthy balanced diet and regular exercise, one or two pounds should disappear each week, and stay off.

#### Have a check-up

High blood pressure and high cholesterol don't cause symptoms, but can be silently damaging the heart and circulation. That's why it's important to have these checked, because if they are too high they can be brought under control with a healthy lifestyle and sometimes medication.

#### Tea-time

Green tea (<http://www.healthydirect.com/product/GRTEA/d.jsf>) may help to lower cholesterol levels, particularly those of damaging bad cholesterol, and may increase good cholesterol levels. Antioxidants in green tea may also help to prevent furring of the arteries.

#### Enjoy time-out

Stress may directly contribute to heart disease and also indirectly contribute by increasing blood pressure and fuelling unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as comfort eating and too much alcohol. Try taking at least five minutes each hour to relax, and at least thirty minutes each day doing something enjoyable.

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