

What is American Heart Awareness Month?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. The month of February is dedicated to raising awareness about heart disease and increasing knowledge about prevention.

Heart disease risk factors

Several health conditions, your lifestyle, and your age and family history can increase your risk for heart disease. These are called risk factors. About half of all Americans (47 percent) have at least one of the three key risk factors for heart disease: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking. Some risk factors you can't control, like your age, sex, and race or ethnicity that can affect your risk for heart disease. Other risk factors include:

- Conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes.
- Behaviors such as unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, obesity, too much alcohol, and tobacco use.
- Family genetics and family history.

How can you lower your risk of developing heart disease?

Controlling and preventing risk factors is also important for people who already have heart disease. To lower your risk:

- Watch your weight.
- Quit smoking and stay away from secondhand smoke.
- Control your cholesterol and blood pressure.
- Limit your sodium intake.
- If you drink alcohol, drink only in moderation.
- Get active and eat healthy.

Mobile apps

- [Smart Blood Pressure \(Smart BP\)](#)
- [Sodium Tracker](#)
- [Cardio](#)
- [Daily Cardio Workout](#)

Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Mark Epstein, MD**, our Chief Medical Officer.

Support of a family member or friend can be the starting and motivating factor for a person struggling to manage and control high blood pressure successfully. You may find yourself asking, "How can I help, and how can I make a difference?" Here are some tips on how you can help your loved ones:

- **Start with a conversation.** Find out what your loved one is already doing to control their high blood pressure and what you can do to support them. This might include: going with them to healthcare visits, helping monitor their blood pressure, and reminding them to take medications.
- **Provide emotional support.** Be positive. Help your loved one remember that this is a marathon, not a sprint, and that control is possible.
- **Make control your goal.** Help your loved one set up a routine to take medications regularly and set reminders to get their blood pressure checked regularly. Help him or her eat better. If your he or she smokes, help them quit. And finally, have some fun and be more active with your loved one.

Additional resources

- [American Heart Association](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Heart Disease](#)
- [Healthfinder.gov](#)
- [Million Hearts](#)
- [Quit Now NM](#)