



ABCS of Heart Health

To reduce the risk of heart attack or stroke



Every year, Americans suffer more than **1.5 million heart attacks and strokes**. But following the ABCS can help reduce your risk and improve your heart health.

A: Take **asp**irin as directed by your health care professional.

B: Control your **bl**ood pressure.

C: Manage your **ch**olesterol.

S: Don't **s**moke.

A Take aspirin as directed by your health care professional.

Ask your health care professional if aspirin can reduce your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Be sure to tell your health care professional if you have a family history of heart disease or stroke, and mention your own medical history.

B Control your blood pressure.

Blood pressure measures the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries. If your blood pressure stays high for a long time, you may suffer from high blood pressure (also called hypertension). High blood pressure increases your risk for heart attack or stroke more than any other risk factor. Find out what your blood pressure numbers are, and ask your health care professional what those numbers mean for your health. If you have high blood pressure, work with your health care professional to lower it.

C Manage your cholesterol.

Cholesterol is a waxy substance produced by the liver and found in certain foods. Your body needs cholesterol, but when you have too much, it can build up in your arteries and cause heart disease. There are different types of cholesterol: One type is “good” and can protect you from heart disease, but another type is “bad” and can increase your risk. Talk to your health care professional about cholesterol and how to lower your bad cholesterol if it's too high.

S Don't smoke.

Smoking raises your blood pressure, which increases your risk for heart attack and stroke. If you smoke, quit. Talk with your health care professional about ways to help you stick with your decision. It's never too late to quit smoking. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW today.

Million Hearts® is a national initiative to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. It is led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, two agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services.

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Heart disease and stroke are the first and fourth leading causes of death in the United States.

Together, these diseases cause 1 in 3 deaths.

The good news is that you can reduce your risk by following the ABCS!

Rosa was caring for her granddaughter when she felt a sharp pain in her chest that didn't go away. At the hospital, the health care professional told her that she had high blood pressure and that it had caused a heart attack. Rosa was surprised—she didn't feel bad most of the time and didn't know she had high blood pressure. The health care professional gave Rosa medicine to help control her blood pressure and prevent another heart attack. Rosa takes her medicine every day so she can keep her blood pressure under control. It's important to Rosa to stay healthy. She wants to see her granddaughter grow up and get married one day.



What do I need to know about high blood pressure?

High blood pressure is the leading cause of heart attack and stroke in the United States. It can also damage your eyes and kidneys. **One in three American adults has high blood pressure, and only about half of them have it under control.**

How is blood pressure measured? Two numbers (for example, 140/90) help determine blood pressure. The first number measures systolic pressure, which is the pressure in the blood vessels when the heart beats. The second number measures diastolic pressure, which is the pressure in the blood vessels when the heart rests between beats.

When and how should I take my blood pressure?

Take your blood pressure regularly, even if you feel fine. Generally, people with high blood pressure have no symptoms. You can take your blood pressure at home, at many pharmacies, and at your doctor's office.

The doctor is not the only health care professional who can help you follow the ABCS. Nurses, pharmacists, community health workers, health coaches, and other professionals can work with you and your doctor to help you achieve your health goals.

Need confidential health information? Call the Su Familia Helpline at 1-866-783-2645 today.

Su Familia: The National Hispanic Family Health Helpline offers free, reliable information on a wide range of health issues in Spanish and English. The health promotion advisors can help Hispanic clients find affordable health care services in their community.

How can I control my blood pressure? Work with your health care professional to make a plan for controlling your blood pressure. Be sure to follow these guidelines:

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Choose foods low in trans fat and sodium (salt). Most people in the United States consume more sodium than recommended. Everyone age 2 and up should consume less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day. Adults age 51 and older; African Americans of all ages; and people with high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease should consume even less than that: only 1,500 mg of sodium per day.
- **Get moving.** Staying physically active will help you control your weight and strengthen your heart. Try walking for 10 minutes, 3 times a day, 5 days a week.
- **Take your medications.** If you have high blood pressure, your health care professional may give you medicine to help control it. It's important to follow your health care professional's instructions when taking the medication and to keep taking it even if you feel well. Tell your health care professional if the medicine makes you feel bad. Your health care team can suggest different ways to reduce side effects or recommend another medicine that may have fewer side effects.

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