

# Heart Health

## Why Heart Health Matters

Maintaining heart health is crucial for overall well-being, as a strong and healthy heart is fundamental to every function of the body and daily life. By prioritizing heart health, you can lower the risk of heart disease, which is the leading global cause of death, and prevent related chronic illnesses. Adopting a heart-healthy lifestyle—one that includes balanced nutrition, regular exercise, and effective stress management—can greatly enhance your health and overall quality of life.

## What Is Heart Disease?

Heart disease is a broad term for various conditions that affect the heart's structure and function, often leading to serious health problems. It includes coronary artery disease, which occurs when arteries supplying blood to the heart become narrowed or blocked, often due to plaque buildup. The buildup can reduce blood flow and increase the risk of heart attacks. Heart disease can also refer to issues like arrhythmia (irregular heartbeats), heart failure (when the heart can't pump effectively), and congenital heart defects. Understanding these conditions and their risk factors is essential for prevention and effective management.

## Prevention Tips for a Healthy Heart

### 1. Eat a Heart-Healthy Diet

- Focus on consuming fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats
- Limit intake of saturated fats, trans fats, processed sugars, sodium, and cholesterol
- **Actionable Tip:** Meal prep for the week using heart-healthy recipes
- **Resources:** [Healthy on Campus Dining Options](#), [Farm Fresh to you](#), [Healthy recipes through Health Advocate](#)

### 2. Stay Active

- Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week, along with muscle-strengthening exercises
- To meet the goal of at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity each week, try walking for just 30 minutes a day
- **Actionable Tip:** Take a walk on your breaks or join Pepperdine's group fitness classes
- **Resources:** [Free group fitness classes, state-of-the-art facilities, including, tennis and pickleball courts, lap pool, track and field, and a fully equipped fitness center](#)

### 3. Choose Healthy Beverages

- Rethink your drink: Substitute water for sugary drinks
- If you choose to drink alcohol, moderate alcohol consumption
- **Actionable Tip:** Carry a reusable water bottle to encourage hydration throughout the day and add a splash of fruit or herbs like mint for flavor without added sugar. For alcohol, set personal limits and alternate with water to stay mindful of your intake.
- **Resources:** [Substance Misuse and Addiction resources through Health Advocate](#)

### 4. Quit Smoking, Vaping, and Tobacco Use, and Avoid Secondhand Smoke

- Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke greatly increase your risk of heart disease
- **Actionable Tip:** Set a quit date within the next two weeks and create a plan to manage triggers, such as stress or social situations, by practicing deep breathing or carrying a stress-relief item.
- **Resources:** [Health Advocate Tobacco Cessation Program](#)

### 5. Monitor and Manage Cholesterol, Blood Glucose, and Blood Pressure

- Regularly check cholesterol and blood glucose levels and blood pressure and manage them through a balanced diet, regular exercise, and medication if necessary
- **Actionable Tip:** Schedule annual health screenings
- **Resources:** [Pacific Health and Wellness Preventative Health Screenings](#), [Quest Biometric Screenings](#)

### 6. Manage Stress

- Incorporate relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga, or deep breathing into your routine
- **Actionable Tip:** Incorporate breathing exercises into your daily routine
- **Resources:** [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#), [Kaiser Self Care Apps](#), [Campus recreation yoga videos](#)

### 7. Get Adequate Sleep

- Aim for seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night
- **Actionable Tip:** Establish a consistent bedtime routine and reduce screen time before bed
- **Resources:** [Calm for Kaiser members](#)