

How do I quit?

- At those times when you usually smoke, plan a substitute activity
- Stay motivated – the first few days are the toughest
- Avoid other smokers and smoke-filled environments
- Find support. Refer to a smoke-quitting association, support group or medical support
- Consider using medical quitting aids such as nicotine patches, sprays, gums and medication.

After quitting, many effects are reversible.

Stress

Stress has been linked to an increased risk for heart disease. While we can't always escape stress, managing stress effectively is important for a healthy lifestyle. Often, we reach for unhealthy foods and snacks, skip our exercise, drink alcohol excessively and turn to smoking to help us deal with stress – all major risk factors for CVD!

Here are some tips to help you to cope with stress better:

- Write down your troubles and share them with trusted friends or family
- Practise good time management, and plan ahead of time
- Accept that you can't control everything, and relax about the things you cannot change
- Prioritise! Only do the most important things, and don't stress about the things that don't really matter
- Learn to say "no" if your to-do list is too long
- Give up on the bad habits – too much alcohol, smoking or caffeine can actually increase your stress levels
- Exercise! Go for a walk or pound it out in the gym
- Get enough sleep, which for most people is about seven to eight hours a night
- Take time to do something you enjoy.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA offers FREE blood pressure screenings. Visit www.heartfoundation.co.za or call 021 403 6450 for details.

Obesity

Being overweight or obese puts you at higher risk for health problems, including heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, certain cancers, gallstones and degenerative joint disease.

Obesity is caused mainly by taking in more calories (energy) in the diet than are used up in exercise and daily activities. The westernised lifestyle promotes overweight and obese states. We are less active and eat more unhealthy foods, especially processed foods and take-outs.

How do you know if you are overweight or obese?

Weight status can be assessed using various measures including body mass index (BMI) or waist circumference.

Body Mass Index (BMI): To measure BMI, take your weight (in kg) and divide it by your height (in m²) i.e. BMI = weight/(height)².

The following table will help determine your BMI:

Table 1: BMI Classification

BMI (kg/m ²)	Classification
Less than 18.5	Underweight
18.5–24.9	Normal (healthy)
25–29.9	Overweight
30 or more	Obese

Some people (e.g. body builders) may have a high BMI score but very little body fat. For these people, a waist circumference measure, a skinfold thickness or other more direct methods of measuring body fat may be more useful measures.

Waist circumference

Waist circumference is the measurement around your natural waist (just above the belly button). It can also be used to determine disease risk. A waist circumference of more than 80cm for women and 94cm for men indicates an increased risk.

Reducing your risk:

If you're overweight or obese, you can reduce your risk by successfully losing weight and keeping it off.

Even losing a few kilograms can provide health benefits, so consider working towards a healthier weight.

Tips for weight loss

- Set a reasonable and realistic goal for weight loss (see a registered dietitian if you need more help)
- Eat slowly and enjoy your food
- Eat less by reducing your portion sizes and use a smaller plate
- Avoid eating when you are not hungry and eating out of boredom or frustration
- Stick to three balanced meals a day and have healthy snacks such as fruit or veggie sticks in between if you're really hungry
- Drink lots of water every day
- Make sure that your starchy foods are high fibre or are wholegrain, as these will keep you feeling fuller for longer
- Choose lower fat foods (preferably fat free) daily to help reduce your total energy intake. Cook using low fat methods (e.g. baking, boiling or grilling) and avoid adding unnecessary oils and fats to your food
- It is very important to increase your level of physical activity.

Our children are already at risk:

The westernised lifestyle has many negative effects on children, including inactivity. Children may prefer to watch television, play computer games or surf the Internet rather than play outside or participate in sports, but it is important to encourage them to keep moving.

Children are tempted to eat junk or fast foods but these foods are high in 'bad' fats (particularly saturated and trans fats), salt and sugar, and low in fibre and micronutrients. Limit your children's access to these foods to reduce their risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes later in life.

It is important to make sure that you provide a healthy environment for your kids to grow into healthy adults. You can do this by packing healthy lunch boxes, ensuring that your child's school provides healthy foods at tuck shops and teaching your children about healthy foods.

Healthy habits from a young age

The signs of CVD can start in children as young as two years of age. Protect your children from future disease by encouraging healthy habits at an early age. Teach them to love healthy foods and enjoy sports and physical activities. You will make it much easier for them later in life.

Heart Mark

The Heart Mark makes it easier for shoppers to choose healthier products on the supermarket shelf and on the menu when eating out. Products that carry the Heart Mark logo can be trusted to be the healthier choice because they:

- Have been thoroughly tested by an independent accredited laboratory
- Meet stringent nutritional criteria for fats, sodium, cholesterol, added sugars and fibre (where applicable)
- Are spot-checked to make sure they meet criteria
- Can be used as part of the HSF's eating plan

Living a healthy lifestyle



What is the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA (HSF)?

Vision

To see fewer South Africans suffer or die from preventable heart and blood vessel disease, and stroke.

Mission

To get more South Africans to adopt healthy lifestyles through raising awareness, education and research.



THE HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION SOUTH AFRICA

Exercise

Lack of regular physical activity is a risk factor for many diseases, including high blood pressure, diabetes, cancers, osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease (CVD). In comparison to those who exercise regularly, inactive people double their risk of suffering a heart attack and have a higher risk of dying immediately after such an attack. The good news is that regular exercise can give you the most profound long-term health benefits.

Keep the beat!

The heart of someone who exercises regularly will beat 45–50 times per minute. The heart of someone who does not exercise regularly will beat 70–75 times per minute. This means 36 000 extra beats per day and 13 million extra beats every year for unhealthy hearts.

What are the benefits of regular exercise?

- ♥ Reduces risk of heart disease and stroke
- ♥ Improves ‘good’ cholesterol levels
- ♥ Helps lower high blood pressure
- ♥ Helps reduce and control body weight
- ♥ Helps control blood sugar levels and reduces the risk of developing diabetes
- ♥ Helps to manage stress and releases tension
- ♥ Delays/prevents chronic illnesses/diseases associated with aging
- ♥ Reduces risk of bowel and breast cancer
- ♥ Reduces the risk of developing osteoporosis
- ♥ Smokers who exercise are twice as successful in their attempts to quit

Which types of exercise work best?

Any type of physical activity is good. Walking, dancing, gardening, cycling, swimming and other similar activities, including your usual daily chores, can all contribute to your wellbeing and general fitness.

How much exercise do I need?

Aim for a minimum level of 30 minutes of moderate activity 5 times a week OR 150 minutes of moderate activity per week OR 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week. You do not have to do all your exercise in one go. You can split your 30 minutes into 10-minute bouts.

How hard should I exercise?

Start slowly and gradually increase the pace to a level that makes you sweat. Also, a way of monitoring exercise intensity is to use the ‘talk test’ i.e. when exercising, you should be able to talk throughout the workout.

Frequently Asked Questions

If I exercise, will it prevent heart disease?

Physical inactivity is a major modifiable risk factor for heart disease. The risk of CVD or its risk factors is lower with increased activity.

Should I see a doctor before I start becoming physically active?

If you are middle-aged or older, are inactive, at high risk for heart disease or you already have a medical condition, you should seek medical advice before you start exercise or significantly increase your physical activity. Most healthy people of any age can safely engage in moderate levels of physical activity (e.g. moderate walking, gardening and housework) without consulting a doctor first. Walking is the safest and easiest form of exercise for everybody.

How much physical activity is enough?

If you’re inactive, doing anything is better than nothing! Studies show that those who have a low fitness level are much more likely to die early than people who have achieved even a moderate level of fitness. If you want to exceed a moderate level of fitness, you need to exercise at least five times a week for 30 to 60 minutes.

Does exercise counteract the harmful effects of other risk factors?

Exercise lowers high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol. However, you cannot smoke and eat unhealthily and expect to work off the damage by exercising. Exercise should be done as part of a healthy lifestyle that includes a healthy balanced diet, moderate alcohol intake (if any), an ideal body weight and not smoking.

Is it too late for a senior citizen to become physically active?

The older you are, the more you need regular exercise. However, it is important to take some special precautions. If you have a family history of heart disease, consult your doctor before starting an exercise programme. And don’t try too much too fast – exercise at an intensity level appropriate to you.

Eat Well

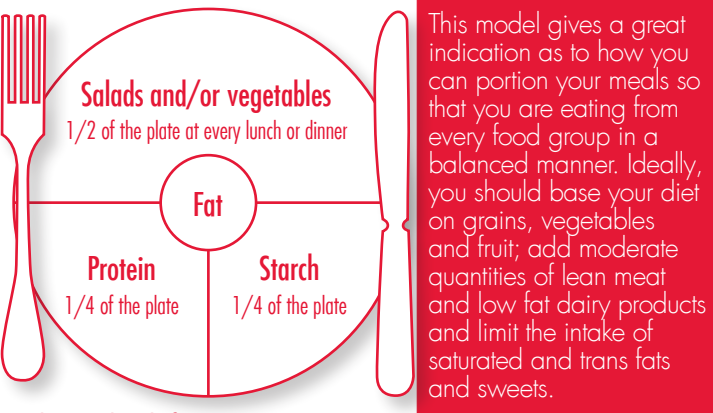
Living healthily, including regular exercise and a balanced diet, go a long way to reducing the risk of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease.

Our guidelines for a healthy diet:

- ♥ Eat a healthy, balanced diet including a variety of foods
- ♥ Eat smaller, more regular meals
- ♥ Make starchy foods, especially those rich in fibre and wholegrains, part of most meals

- ♥ Include at least five servings of vegetables and fruit every day
- ♥ Include fish as part of your diet at least twice a week. Good examples are: snoek, sardines, tuna, pilchards, mackerel and salmon
- ♥ Limit the intake of red meat to two to three times per week. Regularly include legumes (beans, peas, lentils and soya) as alternatives to meat
- ♥ Eat fats sparingly, limiting ‘bad’ fats, such as butter or fatty meat, and including more ‘good’ fats in your diet, such as vegetable oils (e.g. sunflower, canola or olive oil), soft tub margarines, avocados, nuts, peanut butter and seeds
- ♥ Limit intake of foods high in cholesterol like organ meats, calamari, shrimps and prawns
- ♥ Limit intake of refined and sugary foods and beverages
- ♥ Have at least two servings of low fat or fat free milk/dairy products every day
- ♥ Use salt sparingly. Intake should be limited to 1 teaspoon a day (5g) – remember that processed foods, e.g. processed meats like viennas and polony, salty snacks such as chips and take-aways also contain a lot of hidden salt
- ♥ If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation
- ♥ Drink lots of water every day

The healthy plate model



Fighting ‘bad’ fats

- ♥ Eat more poultry (skinless) and fish than red meat
- ♥ Buy lean meats and trim off any visible fat before cooking
- ♥ Cut down on full cream dairy products, use low fat or fat-free products instead
- ♥ Replace butter, ghee, lard and hard brick margarines with soft tub margarines
- ♥ Use low fat/fat-free cottage cheese instead of high fat hard cheeses like cheddar
- ♥ Use non-stick pans and cooking sprays for grilling or stir-frying
- ♥ Grill, steam, boil, bake, pan fry in very little oil or poach foods rather than deep frying

Excessive alcohol intake

If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Drinking too much alcohol increases blood pressure and causes increased levels of triglycerides (a type of fat in the blood). It may also contribute to the development of obesity, diabetes, liver disease and sudden cardiac death.

If alcohol is consumed, it should be limited to:

- ♥ 2 drinks/day for men
- ♥ 1 drink/day for women. One drink is equal to 125ml wine, 340ml beer or 25ml of spirits or liqueur.

Smoking

Smoking almost triples the risk of heart disease. It narrows blood vessels and expands blood clots, causing the cardiovascular equivalent of a traffic jam on the highway to your heart and brain. Reduce blood flow to the heart and you risk a heart attack. Reduce it to the brain and you risk a stroke.

Smoking causes heart and blood vessel disease by:

- ♥ Increasing blood pressure
- ♥ Increasing blood clotting
- ♥ Increasing carbon monoxide levels and reducing oxygen levels

Passive smoking: Non-smokers who breathe second-hand smoke suffer many of the diseases of active smoking. Second-hand smoke contains five times more carbon monoxide and six times more nicotine than first-hand smoking because the filter on a cigarette offers some protection for the smoker. Second-hand smoke causes health problems in children including bronchitis and pneumonia, exacerbation of asthma, middle ear infections, and glue ear.

Smoking and your baby:

Babies born to mothers who smoke (or are exposed to second-hand smoke) while pregnant are more likely to be underweight, premature or stillborn. There is also the risk of miscarriage and poor intellectual and behavioural development of the child.

The child has a greater risk of sudden infant death syndrome, breathing problems and developing lung disease or diabetes later in his/her life.

The harmful substances from smoking pass through breast milk, so with every cigarette smoked and any second-hand smoke inhaled, the baby is smoking. Smoking reduces milk volume so smoking mothers may produce too little milk.

Is there a ‘safe’ level of smoking?

There is no safe level of smoking, and there is no such thing as a safe cigarette, even those labelled mild and low nicotine.