



# Get to the Heart

6 essential questions to ask your doctor about your heart health

It's time for your physical exam—an opportunity for you and your doctor to check in on your health. But between stepping off the scale and having your vital signs tested, are you asking your doctor questions to make sure your heart is in prime health?

We know that certain risk factors can lead to heart disease, and you can modify many of them with healthy lifestyle choices to reduce your risk. Ask your doctor these questions to understand what changes, if any, you need to make.

## Ask your physician these questions:

**Q. What's my blood pressure? Is it considered healthy?** High blood pressure increases the heart's workload, causing the heart to become thick and stiff. If your blood pressure is high, talk to your physician about medical treatment and behavioral changes that will reduce it.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Q. What's my cholesterol? Is it considered healthy?** When blood cholesterol rises, so does your risk for coronary artery disease. If your cholesterol level is high, ask your physician what you can do to reduce it.

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**Q. How does my family's health history affect my risk of heart disease?** Your health history and heredity play a role in your heart disease risk. While you can't change where you came from or who your parents are, understanding how this affects your risk can help you control other factors.

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**Q. What's my weight? Is it considered healthy?** People who have excess body fat are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke. If you are at an unhealthy weight or have a high body mass index (BMI), your doctor will have suggestions to help you get your weight to an ideal level.

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**Q. How much exercise should I get each week to keep my heart in shape?** An inactive lifestyle is a risk factor for coronary heart disease. Physical activity helps control cholesterol and can help lower blood pressure.

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**Q. What changes should I make in my diet that will be good for my heart?** An abundance of fruits and vegetables and a diet low in fat and high in fiber will help reduce your risk of heart disease. Talk to your physician about diet programs or nutritional education if you want to learn more.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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Source: American Heart Association



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