

7 Doctor-Approved Habits for a Healthier Heart



1. Monitor Your Blood Pressure

- **Why It Matters:** Accurate blood pressure (BP) readings are essential for managing heart health.
- **Quick Tips:**
 - Measure BP at home: sit with back supported, feet flat, after 5 minutes of rest.
 - Take two readings, one minute apart, in the morning and evening for a week.
 - Bring your BP cuff to doctor appointments to check accuracy.
 - **Consult Your Doctor:** Discuss your BP goals and the best monitoring methods for you.

2. Reduce Sodium Intake

- **Why It Matters:** Most sodium comes from packaged foods; reducing it can lower BP.
- **Quick Tips:**
 - Aim for $\leq 2,300$ mg of sodium per day; $\leq 1,500$ mg if you have high BP.
 - Choose 'low sodium' products and cook with herbs and spices instead of salt.
 - **Consult Your Doctor:** Ask about your sodium goals and consider a dietitian referral.

3. Eat Potassium-Rich Foods

- **Why It Matters:** Potassium helps balance sodium and maintain healthy BP.
- **Quick Tips:**
 - Include foods like beans, leafy greens, bananas, and fish in your diet.
 - Follow a plant-forward meal plan with the DASH approach.
 - **Consult Your Doctor:** Ensure it's safe to increase potassium based on your health.

4. Stay Physically Active

- **Why It Matters:** Regular exercise lowers BP and improves heart health.
- **Quick Tips:**

- Aim for 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous activity weekly.
- Include strength training at least two days a week.
- **Consult Your Doctor:** Discuss safe exercise limits for your condition.

5. Prioritize Quality Sleep

- **Why It Matters:** Good sleep helps control BP and reduces cardiovascular risk.
- **Quick Tips:**
 - Get 7–9 hours of sleep per night and maintain a consistent schedule.
 - Create a calming bedtime routine and screen for sleep apnea if necessary.
 - **Consult Your Doctor:** Explore sleep apnea screening and medication impacts on sleep.

6. Limit Alcohol, Avoid Tobacco and Vaping

- **Why It Matters:** Alcohol and nicotine can increase BP and harm heart health.
- **Quick Tips:**
 - Limit alcohol to 1 drink/day for women, 2 for men.
 - Avoid smoking and vaping; seek support to quit.
 - **Consult Your Doctor:** Create a safe alcohol plan and explore cessation resources.

7. Partner with Your Care Team

- **Why It Matters:** Effective communication and stress management improve BP control.
- **Quick Tips:**
 - Keep an updated medication list and BP log for doctor visits.
 - Practice stress management techniques like breathing exercises.
 - **Consult Your Doctor:** Discuss medication optimization and stress management resources.

Disclaimer: This guide is for educational purposes and not a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult your healthcare provider about your health conditions and treatment options.