



Healthy Living:

Take What You Need to Help Prevent Heart Attack and Stroke

Am I at risk for heart attack or stroke?

Your risk may be higher than average if you have any of these medical conditions:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Heart disease
- Peripheral arterial disease (PAD)

How do these conditions increase my risk?

These conditions are caused by narrowed, clogged blood vessels (atherosclerosis). Some also cause atherosclerosis. As artery walls get damaged, fatlike deposits (plaque) can build up in the vessels.

Over time, plaque buildup can:

- Gradually narrow the arteries. Blood flow and delivery of oxygen to the body are reduced. This can affect many systems.
- Suddenly block blood vessels, causing a heart attack or stroke.

You can take steps to reduce risk and protect your health. Steps can include:

- Taking medications to manage your blood pressure, cholesterol, or blood sugar, as prescribed by your doctor.
- Making healthy lifestyle choices.

Work with your doctor and care team to create a plan that's right for you.

Heart health tips

- Check your blood pressure regularly and keep a record of your results.
- Know how each medication you take can affect you. When talking with your doctor about a new medication, you may want to ask:
 - Why am I taking this?
 - When and how should I take it?
 - What are possible side effects? If I have side effects, what are my options?
 - Is this safe to take if I'm pregnant or may become pregnant?
- Make healthier choices. Your daily habits are important for heart health. Look for opportunities to make healthier choices. Start by making just one change that's doable and important to you.
 - Move more. Do things you enjoy, such as walking or biking. Gradually work up to 30 minutes of activity on most days.
 - Eat more fresh vegetables, fruits, and other high-fiber foods.
 - Flavor foods with herbs and spices instead of salt.
 - Cook and eat at home more often. Take-out and restaurant meals are often high in salt and fat.
 - Quit tobacco, if you smoke or vape.
 - Limit alcohol.

What medications prevent heart attack and stroke?

The 3 main types of medications that can help prevent heart attack and stroke are:

- Statins
- Blood pressure medications
- Aspirin (if you've already had a cardiovascular event)

Use the information on common heart medications in this table to make a care plan with your doctor.

Medication type	Medication name	How it works	How to take it	
Statins	atorvastatin (Lipitor), simvastatin (Zocor), rosuvastatin (Crestor)	Reduce cholesterol and inflammation in the arteries to help keep arteries open.	Should I take this medication?	
			Yes No	Dose:
ACE (angiotensin converting enzyme) inhibitors/ARBs	lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril), losartan (Cozaar)	Increase the supply of blood and oxygen to the heart. Reduce blood pressure and prevent kidney damage due to high blood pressure.	Should I take this medication?	
			Yes No	Dose:
Beta-blockers	atenolol (Tenormin), metoprolol (Lopressor)	Reduce the workload for the heart by relaxing the heart muscle and slowing heart rate.	Should I take this medication?	
			Yes No	Dose:
Aspirin		Reduce the stickiness of blood cells (platelets) to lower the risk of blood clots that can block arteries.	Should I take this medication?	
			Yes No	Dose:

Tell your doctor or care team if you're taking any herbal supplements or over-the-counter medications. This helps keep you safe.

Other resources: Visit kp.org/mydoctor to view most lab results, email your doctor, and check your preventive health reminders.

This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only. Some photos may include models and not actual patients.

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90342 (Revised 07/22) RL 4.9