

# Ways to Lower Your Risk of Cardiovascular Disease

If you have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, you can take steps to lower your risk for cardiovascular disease.

- **Check your cholesterol** – Your healthcare team should test your cholesterol levels at least once every 4 to 6 years. If you have been diagnosed with high cholesterol or have a family history of high cholesterol, you may need to have your cholesterol checked more often. If you have high cholesterol, medication and lifestyle changes can help reduce your risk for heart disease.
- **Control your blood pressure** – High blood pressure usually has no symptoms, so it is important to have it checked on a regular basis. Talk with your healthcare team about how often you should check your blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure, your healthcare provider may recommend lifestyle changes, such as lowering the sodium in your diet. Your doctor may also prescribe medication to help lower your blood pressure.
- **Manage your diabetes** – If you have diabetes, monitor your blood sugar levels carefully. Talk with your healthcare team about treatment options. Your doctor may recommend certain lifestyle changes to help control your blood sugar. These changes will help reduce your risk for heart disease.
- **Take medications as prescribed** – If you take medication to treat high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, follow your doctor's instructions carefully. Never stop taking your medication without first talking to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. Always ask questions if you don't understand something.
- **Work with your healthcare team** – You and your healthcare provider can work together to prevent or treat the medical conditions that lead to heart disease. Discuss your treatment plan regularly and bring a list of questions to your appointments. If you've already had a heart attack, your doctor will work with you to prevent another one. Your treatment plan may include medication or surgery and lifestyle changes to reduce your risk. Be sure to take prescribed medications as directed.

