

# TAKING ACTION TO MANAGE HEART HEALTH

February 2014

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

### Do Not Forget These Other Great Resources:

Healthwise® Handbook, the 24-Hour Nurse Line, Nurse Online Chat, Audio Health Information Library® and you can go online to [www.express-health.com](http://www.express-health.com) for links to reliable health information.

#### CHALLENGE:

Take action this Heart Health month by reading food labels when making your selections at the grocery store. Look for foods high in fiber, and low in sodium, saturated fats and trans-fats. Also be sure to pay attention to the serving size.

#### SOURCES:

[www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
[www.livestrong.com](http://www.livestrong.com)

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8200 Haverstick Road, Suite 150  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46240

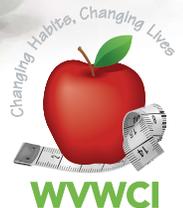
MAIN: 317.573.7600

FAX: 317.573.7667

TOLL-FREE: 888.573.1568

[www.express-health.com](http://www.express-health.com)

[www.spectrumhs.com](http://www.spectrumhs.com)



February is Heart Health month. It is extremely important to be aware of your heart health. Two components that can lead to an unhealthy heart are blood pressure and cholesterol. About half of the 68 million Americans with high blood pressure, and 2 in 3 of the 71 million Americans with high cholesterol are not taking action to manage these conditions. Take action now to keep your heart healthy.

Know your numbers: Knowing your blood pressure, cholesterol, and waist size are imperative when it comes to understanding what actions to take.

	Blood Pressure	Total Cholesterol	HDL (Good Cholesterol)	LDL's (Bad Cholesterol)	Triglycerides (Bad Cholesterol)	Waist Size (Inches)
Healthy Range	Less than 120/80	200 or Less	Men: 40 or higher Women: 50 or Higher	Less than 130	Less than 150	Men: Less than 40 Women: Less than 35

### HEALTHY HEART ACTIONS:

- **Quit Smoking:** If you are currently a smoker, the best thing you can do for your heart is quit. If you don't smoke, don't start. Smoking results in plaque buildup in your arteries greatly increasing your chance of stroke or heart attack and increasing your blood pressure.
- **Eat a Well-Balanced Diet:** Cholesterol, waist size and blood pressure readings can all be improved by eating 3 well balanced, proper portioned meals. Be sure to get a variety of nutrients by following the USDA My Plate recommendations: Fill ½ the plate with fruits and vegetables; ¼ of the plate with protein; ¼ of the plate with whole grain/high fiber food and a glass of skim milk or a serving of dairy. Make sure you are eating enough fiber each day (21-25g for women, 30-38g for men) and avoid foods with saturated or trans – fats.
- **Exercise Daily:** Adding just 10 minutes of exercise a day, such as a brisk walk, can greatly improve your heart health. No matter what your current activity level is, it is best to continue to challenge yourself and adjust intensity and duration if you hope to see changes in waist size, blood pressure, or cholesterol readings. Increasing aerobic exercise will improve cholesterol, blood pressure, and help manage your weight resulting in a healthier heart.
- **Salt Less:** Many of the foods we like to eat already have enough salt/sodium so it is best not to add more. This is especially true for people with high blood pressure. Sodium is high in processed foods. Take action by reading food labels to track your sodium intake and limit processed foods in your diet. It is also best to increase your water intake and limit or eliminate beverages high in caffeine, sugar, and sodium such as soda. When tracking your daily sodium intake, aim for fewer than 2300 mg and no more than 1500 mg if you currently struggle with heart disease or high blood pressure.
- **Consult Your Physician:** It is vital to see your physician at least once every year in order follow the best customized treatment plan for your heart. Take action and know your numbers by taking advantage of any health screenings and other initiatives offered by your wellness program.