



## Keep Your Motor Running

You probably already know you can support a healthy heart by eating a nutritious diet and exercising regularly. But are you also getting enough sleep, watching your stress levels and taking care of your teeth? These factors are all tied to your cardiac wellness.

### Diet and Exercise

Most people understand the importance of diet and exercise as they relate to heart health. Here's a quick review: Experts recommend you eat more fruits and vegetables, eat fewer processed foods, and watch your portion sizes. Along with following these tips for healthy eating, you should aim for at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise each day. These principles are foundational to your heart health.

### Get Some Shut-Eye

Along with these familiar recommendations is a newer one. In 2022, the American Heart Association®\* officially added sleep as a main factor for heart health. Its Life's Essential 8™ list says we should:

- Eat better.
- Be more active.
- Quit tobacco.
- Get healthy sleep.
- Manage weight.
- Control cholesterol.
- Manage blood sugar.
- Manage blood pressure.

The association says most adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep each night. Studies have linked poor sleep to a heightened risk for cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and obesity.

### Ways To Stress Less

The links between mental health and physical health continue to become clearer and more pronounced. Stress is a big part of the picture. According to a 2017 survey conducted by the American Psychological Association\*, 71 percent of respondents said they had dealt with at least one symptom of stress during the past month, years before the COVID-19 pandemic!

Feeling stressed once in a while is a part of life, but if it lasts for days or weeks, stress can have serious health consequences. Chronic stress might contribute to high blood pressure, a risk factor for heart attack and stroke.

The American Heart Association suggests simple ways to lower your stress levels:

- Listen to your favorite music.
- Go for a walk outside.
- Try meditation or yoga.
- Connect with a friend or family member.
- Find a hobby you enjoy.

**Continued**





### **Nothing but the Tooth**

There are many reasons to adopt good oral care habits. By brushing and flossing regularly, you'll protect your teeth and maintain a healthy smile for life. But did you know you'd also be protecting your heart health?

Researchers aren't yet certain about the connections between oral health and heart health, but they have found enough of a link to make you reach for your toothbrush. For example, gum disease has been associated with a heightened risk for heart disease. And poor oral health can mean you're more likely to develop a bacterial infection in the bloodstream, which can affect the heart valves. Experts say you should floss each day, brush your teeth at least twice a day and get regular dental checkups.

**Follow these tips to improve your overall health and well-being. Your heart will thank you!**

*\*The American Heart Association and the American Psychological Association are independent organizations that offer health information you may find helpful.*

