



*The Heart Truth®*  
Discussion Guide #3  
A Heart-Healthy Lifestyle

### **Be Physically Active**

30 minutes of moderate-intensity on most or all days of the week can increase the strength of your heart. You don't have to join a gym or run a marathon to get your exercise. You can walk briskly, garden, dance, or swim. You can even break your exercise up into three 10-minute segments throughout the day if 30 minutes doesn't fit your schedule.

### **Eat a Heart-Healthy Diet**

Limit the amount of saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol in your diet since these are the substances most likely to raise your blood cholesterol levels. Add color to your meal with the fruits and vegetables you love the most. Cut down on the amount of salt in your diet. Limit yourself to one alcoholic beverage per day.

### **Maintain a Healthy Weight**

Your metabolism and activity level determine how many calories you use up during the day. Try to eat about the same number of calories as you use. Remember, extra calories get stored in the body as fat.

### **Stop Smoking**

If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, work hard at quitting. Most people require multiple attempts before they are able to quit, so don't give up if you've already tried!

### **Manage Diabetes**

If you don't know your blood sugar level, ask your doctor to check it at your next visit. If you have diabetes, control your blood sugar with the diet, exercise, and, if applicable, the medication plan your doctor recommended for you.

### **Take Medication (if prescribed)**

Depending on your health needs, your doctor may prescribe medication for heart-related risk factors such as high blood pressure, cholesterol, or diabetes. If you have any concerns about your medications, contact your doctor.

#### Discussion Questions and Activities:

- Think about the last meal or snack you ate. Was it heart-healthy? If not, can you think of a healthier alternative that is appealing to you?
- Create an activity plan for the next week. If you don't have a full half-hour of time, do you have 10 minutes a day?

Adapted by Catherine Becker, Community Health Intern, UW-Extension, June 2011 from:

*The Heart Truth®* for Women: A Speaker's Guide. *The Heart Truth®*, National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Revised December 2007. Information available at [www.hearttruth.gov](http://www.hearttruth.gov).

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American Heart Association, 2011. Information available at [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org).

United States Department of Agriculture, 2011. Information available at [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov).

*The content of this discussion guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute professional medical advice, diagnosis, treatment or recommendations of any kind. You should always seek the advice of your qualified health care professionals with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your individual needs and any medical conditions.*

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# MY HEART HEALTH GOAL



Setting a goal and putting it in writing will help you to achieve a healthier life. Remember to keep your goal SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time framed.

**One goal I plan to accomplish to improve my heart health:**

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**By what date do I plan to start my goal?** \_\_\_\_\_

**By what date do I plan to complete my goal?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Place this on your refrigerator, at your desk, on your bathroom mirror, on the back door—any place that will remind you of your goal.**

## TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR A HEALTHY HEART

1. Know your risk factors for heart disease.
2. Talk to your doctor about reducing your risk of heart disease.
3. Have your blood pressure checked regularly.
4. Know your cholesterol numbers. [These include total cholesterol, HDL or "good" cholesterol, LDL or "bad" cholesterol, and triglycerides.]
5. Have your blood sugar level checked for diabetes.
6. Do not smoke cigarettes or use other tobacco products.
7. Eat for your heart health.
8. Get regular physical activity. [At least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most or all days of the week.]
9. Aim for a healthy weight.
10. Know the signs and symptoms of a heart attack and the importance of seeking medical help immediately.