



# Be Heart Smart

## CHALLENGE

Make heart-healthy choices daily

## Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read “Be Heart Smart.”
2. Create a plan to be active and eat heart-healthy foods.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



When Kevin Smith worked at a New Jersey convenience store, eating candy bars, hot dogs, soda, and junk food was kind of part of the gig.

But that day job also gave him an idea. Make a movie called Clerks. He wrote the script and actually filmed the movie at the store he worked at after hours. And it launched his career as a screenwriter, actor, film producer, and director.

He started gaining success...and gaining weight. After tipping the scale at 330 pounds, Smith had a massive heart attack at age 48. And he knew things had to change.

He started eating more fruits and vegetables. Walking the dog became a daily routine. And in six months he lost 50-plus pounds, and adopted a lifestyle to lose 50 more.

“I’m on a different path now,” says Smith. “I had to make a switch after my heart attack. Because what’s the alternative, death? It took a minute, but my overall health is better. I sleep better, move better, think better, and I’m healthier.”

How’s your heart health? Did you know heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States?<sup>1</sup> It doesn’t have to be. Your health habits can make a difference. Take the month-long health challenge to Be Heart Smart.

Video:  
How to prevent a heart attack  
<https://tinyurl.com/2u7xh6uw>

## The Tick-Tock Test

How’s your heart health?  
Answer these questions to find out:



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1.   Is your blood pressure 120/80 or higher?
2.   Do you eat red meat?
3.   Are you sedentary most of the time?
4.   Do you have a family history of heart disease?
5.   Are you overweight or obese?
6.   Do you smoke or have exposure to secondhand smoke?

If you answered “Yes” to any of these questions, you could be at risk for heart-related problems. Routine check-ups to measure blood pressure, blood fats, and weight can help you know what habit changes will improve heart health. Diet, exercises, and healthy lifestyle habits can make a big difference.<sup>2</sup>

## Beat the Odds: 8 Heart-Healthy Habits

If you want to improve your heart health...do something about it. About 80 percent of heart-related problems are preventable with diet, exercise, and smart lifestyle habits.<sup>3</sup> Heart are 8 ways to beat the odds and improve heart health:

### 1. Feast on fruits & veggies

Here’s what you should be eating: 1-1/2 to 2 cups of fruit per day, and 2 to 3 cups of vegetables per day. The truth: Only 12% of adults eat enough fruit, and only 10% eat enough vegetables.<sup>4</sup>

Why more fruits & veggies? They’re low in calories. They contain antioxidants, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. Try this:

- Eat a banana for breakfast.
- Add berries to yogurt, cereal, or oatmeal.
- Eat more salads made with leafy greens and other vegetables.
- Include chopped or shredded vegetables in casseroles, breads, or pasta sauce.
- Eat more steamed vegetables.
- Include more beans, peas, and legumes with meals.



## Beat the Odds: 8 Heart-Healthy Habits

### 2. Go with the (whole) grain

Research shows that eating fiber-rich foods like whole grains can protect your heart.<sup>5</sup> Whole grains help improve cholesterol levels and lower the risk for heart disease. Whole-grain foods can also help you manage your weight and control blood sugar levels.

- Eat more whole-grain breads, pasta, oatmeal, and rice.
- When baking, replace half of the refined flour called for in the recipe with whole-grain flour.
- Make sandwiches or toast with whole-grain bread.

### 3. Choose fats with benefits

Fats found in fried foods, ice cream, cheese, milk chocolate, red meat, and many processed foods increase your risk for heart problems. On the other hand, healthy fats protect your heart.

- Use healthy vegetable oils (canola, soy, olive, etc.) for cooking and baking.
- Eat more olives, avocados, nuts, and seeds.
- Add fish to your diet 1 to 2 times a week.

### 4. Shake the salt habit

Most people eat too much sodium, and may not even realize it. Processed foods like pizza, frozen dinners, and fast food are especially high in sodium. Too much can lead to high blood pressure and damage your heart. Aim to eat no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.<sup>6</sup>

10 steps to improve heart health  
<http://tinyurl.com/ydvn65w>

### 5. Be smoke-free

Avoid secondhand smoke. And if you smoke, quit! If you don't smoke, don't start. After you stop, your heart begins to grow stronger right away. Within as little as two years, your risk of a heart attack is nearly the same as a non-smoker.<sup>7</sup>

### 6. Move It

Regular exercise is important for keeping your heart healthy. Aim to get at least 30 minutes of exercise five days a week.<sup>8</sup> Here are some ways to be more active:

- Take a 10-minute walk each morning and afternoon.
- Go to the gym. Try jogging or running. Or take a group exercise class.
- Yard work and vigorous house cleaning counts as exercise too.

### 7. Chill out

Studies show that people with high stress levels at work or home have higher rates of heart disease. Learning to manage stress in healthy ways is good for your heart.<sup>9</sup>

- Limit your stress load. Don't over commit. Learn to say "No" and "I need more help."
- Get adequate rest daily.
- Make time to exercise, relax, and do fun things.
- Don't use alcohol or other addictive substances to manage stress.

Are you at risk for heart disease?  
<https://tinyurl.com/s2s7skd>

- Develop a good support system. Talking with family members, friends, or co-workers about stress in your life can help.

## 8. Get regular checkups

Visit your doctor at least once a year for a check-up. Preventive care and exams can make a difference. Want to keep your heart healthy for years to come? Now is always the best time to start.

### Heart of the Matter

Ready to learn a little more about your heart to keep it healthy? Check out this data on heart health...

**100,000**

Average number of times heart beats per day

**6**

Number of quarts of blood the heart pumps through the body every 20 seconds

**2.5 billion**

Average number of beats the heart makes in a lifetime

**30%**

Average reduction in heart disease risk from eating more plant-based foods, less red meat and more olive oil

**702,880**

Number of people who die from heart disease each year

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# Be Heart Smart

**CHALLENGE**  
Make heart-healthy choices daily

### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Record the number of days you make heart-healthy choices.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to create heart-healthy habits.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH: _____							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [ ] ex. min. _____								
HC [ ] ex. min. _____								
HC [ ] ex. min. _____								
HC [ ] ex. min. _____								
HC [ ] ex. min. _____								

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I practiced heart-healthy habits

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I did other types of physical activity besides walking

### Other wellness projects completed this month:

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_