

Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle



It's very important for you to continue making health lifestyle changes after your LVAD implant procedure. If you need help making lifestyle changes, talk to your health care providers to assist with creating strategies or referring you to other resources. Below are some tips to get you started on the path to better health.

The SINGLE most important thing you can do for your heart is to **Stop Smoking.**

Smoking

- Decreases the oxygen supply to the heart muscle
- Causes artery wall damage
- Decreases HDL (good) cholesterol
- Increases heart rate and blood pressure
- Can contribute to problems with heart rhythm

You must decide to quit smoking. No one else can make you stop. You can gradually eliminate cigarettes or stop all at once.

Here are some tips to help:

- Set a date to quit.
- Get support from family and friends.
- Get support from your health care providers. For example, your physician can sometimes prescribe medications that will aid you in your efforts to quit.
- Use substitutes – sugarless candy, crafts or even a short straw that you hold in your hand.
- Avoid using high fat, high calorie foods for substitutes.
- Try a smoking cessation program – your cardiologist or local lung and heart associations can recommend one. Call the UM Tobacco Consultation Service for help **734-998-6222**. The Michigan Tobacco Quit Line **1-800-784-8669** is free to Michigan residents.
- If you fail to quit, try again – YOU CAN DO IT!

Blood Pressure Control

High blood pressure can put added stress on your heart and arteries and speed up the process of atherosclerosis. It is important to have your blood pressure checked on a regular basis and take your blood pressure medication as directed.

- DO NOT stop taking your medication unless your physician tells you to.
- DO follow a low salt diet and avoid adding salt to your foods.
- DO exercise regularly and lose weight if necessary.
- DO follow all doctor's orders.
- DO use relaxation techniques to decrease stress.

Less Fat and Cholesterol in Your Diet

A lifestyle that promotes a healthy weight includes moderate exercise and a nutritious diet, which reduces your risk of future heart disease.

This eating plan should include a diet which is:

- **LOW** - in animal and dairy fat and tropical oils (saturated fat)
- **LOW** - in foods containing "partially hydrogenated vegetable oil" (trans fat)
- **LOWER** - in foods containing corn, safflower, and sunflower oils (omega-6 polyunsaturated fat)
- **HIGHER** - in foods containing olive, canola, and peanut oils; nuts and avocados (mono-unsaturated fat); fish, flax seed, soybeans and some nuts like walnuts (omega-3 polyunsaturated fat)

*Recent studies show that foods rich in omega-3 polyunsaturated fats may help reduce the risk of coronary disease, sudden death, abnormal heart rhythms, high triglycerides, blood clotting and some inflammatory and autoimmune diseases.

You may also wish to include foods that contain plant stanols or plant sterols to lower your LDL cholesterol. These include some margarines, some juices and other foods. Ask to talk to a dietitian to learn more about this.

A diet high in vegetables, whole fruits and whole grains (instead of juices, sweet and refined foods) provides additional vitamins, minerals, “plant chemicals” and fiber that protect your heart and arteries and promote weight control.

Regular Exercise

Regular exercise can strengthen your heart muscle and increase your body’s ability to use oxygen.

- Brisk walking, jogging, swimming and bicycling are excellent forms of exercise.
- Your exercise program should start slowly in the hospital and gradually increase.

Exercise should be fun and should fit into your lifestyle. Everyone is different. Some people will be able to walk long distances and others will not. Simply do as much as you can, as often as you can.



Control Diabetes

Diabetes directly affects your heart and blood vessels. Good control of your blood sugar is important to help with wound healing and prevent infection. It is important to follow a strict diet to try to reduce the amount of damage to your vital organs. If you have any questions about a proper diabetic regimen, please ask your nurse or hospital dietitian for diabetic diet education materials. Dietitians can help you choose healthy foods and develop meal plans to promote blood sugar control.

Decrease Stress

Stress is present in everyone's life. How you react to stress can directly affect your health. Many books and methods are available to help you control stress. Ask your heart doctor or nurse to recommend stress reduction programs in your community, helpful books or other sources of information.

Control Weight

Excess weight puts added strain on your heart and raises your blood pressure. It is important to control your weight. However, do not begin a weight loss program without consulting with your doctor.

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