

# Making **Healthy Food** and **Lifestyle Choices**



Our Guide for American Adults



## You're **In Charge**

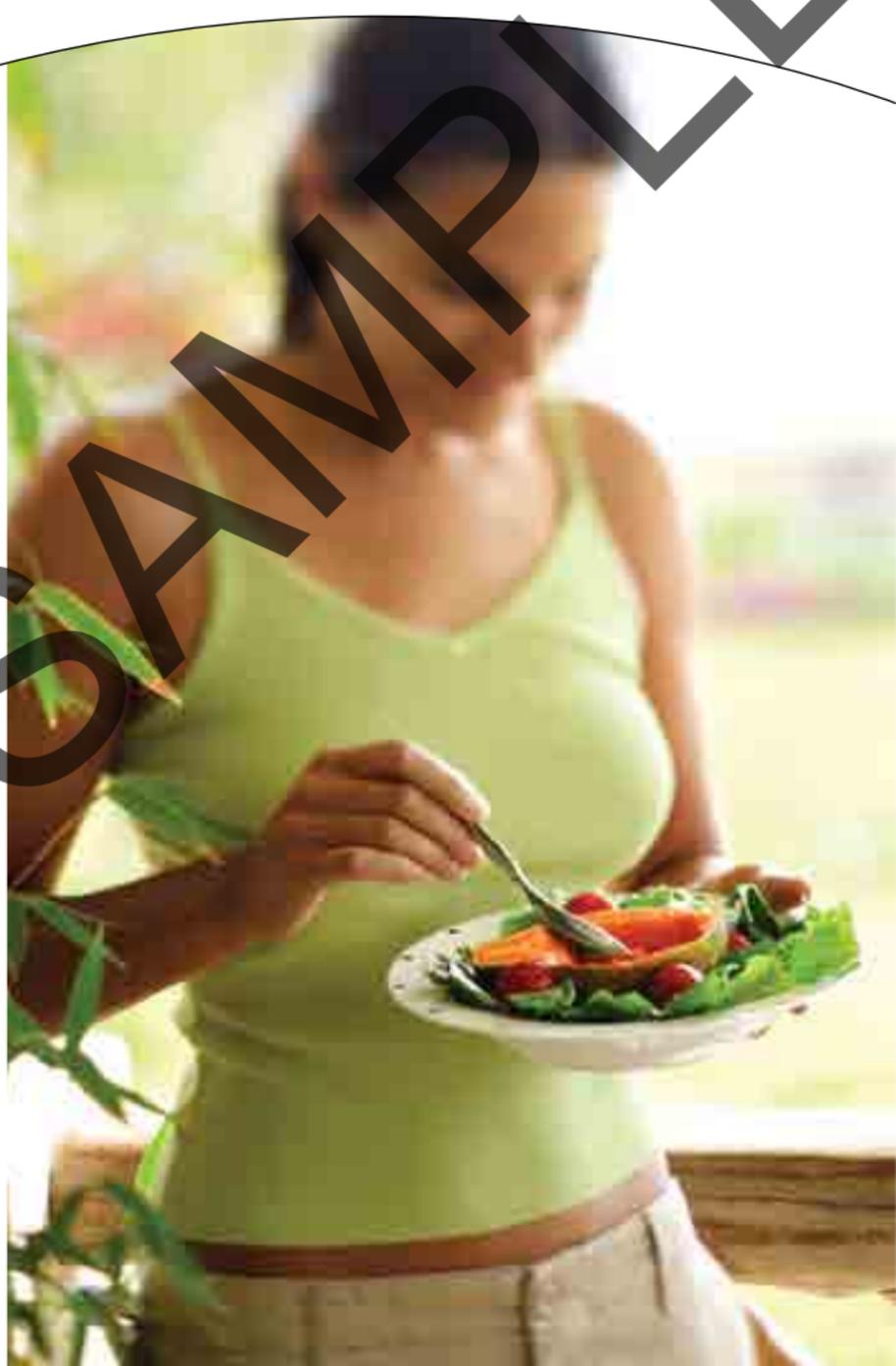
A healthcare provider can treat and advise you. And you should see one regularly. But only YOU can make healthy choices every day. ***Your health is why*** it's important to make healthy choices that can help reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Your lifestyle and eating habits influence how well your heart and body work and how you feel. This booklet can help you get started on the path to better health.



# Creating a **Healthy Food** and **Lifestyle Plan**

We all need a simple plan to help us make clear and easy choices. When you make good food and lifestyle choices, you and your family can enjoy the benefits for years to come. This lifestyle and eating plan is intended for healthy adults of all ages.



## Four Steps Toward Better Health

The basic plan is simple: Develop healthy eating habits and be physically active.

1. Eat a variety of nutritious foods from all the food groups.
2. Limit foods and beverages that are high in calories but low in nutrients.
3. Use up at least as many calories as you take in.
4. Don't use tobacco products and avoid second-hand smoke.

Make these four steps part of your daily life. By doing so, you'll improve your health and reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke. The pages that follow explain all the steps and how to make each one work for you.



# Step One: **Eat a Variety of Nutritious Foods**

You may be eating plenty of food. But you may not be eating the nutrient-rich foods your body needs for good health.

Nutrient-rich foods have vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients.

Nutrient-poor foods are high in unhealthy things, such as saturated and *trans* fats, added sugars and sodium and low in healthy nutrients. They also tend to be higher in calories.

## **How Much Should You Eat?**

Review the chart on the next page. It shows the suggested number of servings from each food group for persons eating 1,600 or 2,000 calories per day using the DASH diet as an example. Your healthcare provider can help you decide how many calories a day you should eat.



## Suggested Servings Following the DASH Diet

Foods	1,600 Calories	2,000 Calories
<b>Grains:</b> At least half of your daily grain servings should be whole-grain foods	6 servings per day	6–8 servings per day
<b>Vegetables:</b> Eat a variety of colors and types	3–4 servings per day	4–5 servings per day
<b>Fruits:</b> Eat a variety of colors and types	4 servings per day	4–5 servings per day
<b>Fat-free or low-fat dairy products</b>	2–3 servings per day	2–3 servings per day
<b>Lean meats, poultry and seafood</b>	3–6 oz (cooked) per day	Less than 6 oz per day
<b>Nuts, seeds and legumes</b>	3–4 servings per week	4–5 servings per week

# Understanding Serving Sizes

How big is a “serving” of the foods you eat daily? The chart below can help you understand how to judge serving sizes.

## Grains

- 1 slice bread
- 1 oz dry cereal (check nutrition label for cup measurements of different products)
- ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or cereal (about the size of a baseball)

## Vegetables

- 1 cup raw leafy vegetables (about the size of a small fist)
- ½ cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetables
- ½ cup vegetable juice

## Nuts, seeds and legumes

- ⅓ cup or 1½ oz nuts
- 2 tbsp peanut butter
- 2 tbsp or ½ oz seeds
- ½ cup dry beans or peas



### **Lean meats, poultry and seafood**

- 3 oz cooked meat is about the size of a computer mouse
- 3 oz grilled fish is about the size of a checkbook

### **Fruits**

- 1 medium fruit (about the size of a baseball)
- ¼ cup dried fruit
- ½ cup fresh, frozen or canned fruit
- ½ cup fruit juice

### **Fat-free or low-fat dairy products**

- 1 cup fat-free or low-fat milk
- 1 cup fat-free or low-fat yogurt
- 1½ oz fat-free or low-fat cheese (about the size of 6 stacked dice)

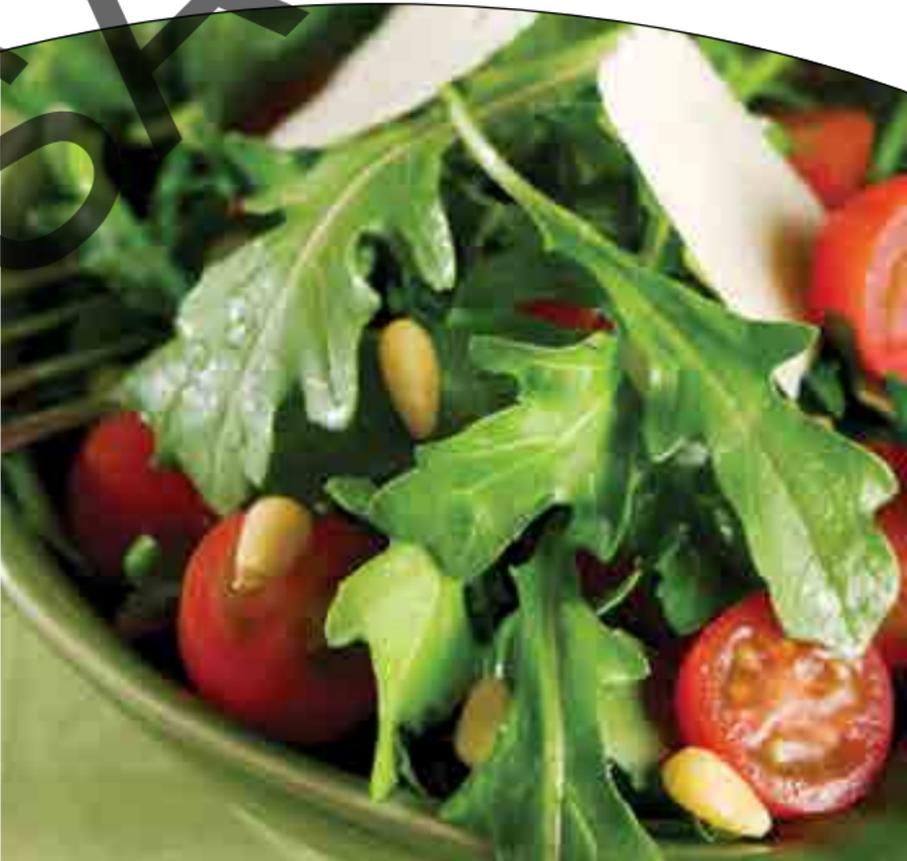
# Choosing Healthy Foods Every Day

Learn to plan healthy meals. Choose vegetables, fruits and whole-grain products (breads, cereals, pasta and rice). And pick fat-free or low-fat dairy products, skinless poultry, fish, legumes and nuts. Choosing these foods most often helps your body get the nutrients it needs to thrive.

## Vegetables and Fruits

Vegetables and fruits are high in vitamins, minerals and fiber—and they're usually low in calories. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables can help lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk for heart disease. It may also help you control your weight.

- Include fruits and vegetables at every meal and snack.



- Replace high-calorie, nutrient-poor foods with fruits and vegetables.
- Eat a wide variety of vegetables and fruits.
- Eat whole vegetables and fruits to get all of the nutrients (such as fiber) that can be missing in some juices.
- Look for vegetables and fruits that are fresh, frozen or canned in water without added sugar, saturated and *trans* fats, or salt.
- Prepare fresh vegetables and fruits without adding saturated and *trans* fats, sugar or salt.

### **Whole-Grain Foods**

Unrefined whole-grain foods have fiber that can help lower your cholesterol. This is very important in preventing heart disease and stroke. Fiber can also help you feel full, so it may help you better manage your weight.

- Choose whole-grain foods, such as whole wheat, oats/oatmeal, rye, barley and corn. Also try popcorn, brown rice, wild rice, buckwheat, bulgur (cracked wheat), millet, quinoa and sorghum.
- Choose breads and other foods that say “whole grains” first on the ingredient list.
- Aim for about 25–30 grams of fiber from foods each day.

## Skinless Poultry and Lean Meats

Choose skinless poultry without much visible fat. Limit red meat intake, and, when you shop, look for lean cuts of meat and pork labeled “loin” and “round.” They usually have less fat.

- Remove all visible fat from poultry and meat before cooking.
- Remove skin from poultry before cooking or eating.
- Check the nutrition label for sodium that may have been added during processing.
- Grill, bake or broil poultry and meats without adding a lot of sodium or saturated and *trans* fats.
- Limit processed meats, which are often high in saturated fat and sodium.



## **Fish**

Many oily fish contain healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Eat fish rich in these natural oils at least twice a week. It may help lower your risk of death from coronary artery disease.

- Examples of fish that can be rich in omega-3 fatty acids include salmon, trout and herring.
- Grill, bake or poach fish. Limit fried fish. Garnish with a lemon wedge instead of using cream sauces.
- Prepare fish without added salt or saturated and *trans* fats.

## **Dairy**

Select fat-free and 1% (low-fat) dairy products. These include milk, cheese and yogurt.

- Limit dairy products made with whole-fat milk, such as butter, full-fat yogurts and cheeses.
- Reduce your intake of whole or 2% milk and full-fat dairy products by switching to fat-free, 1% (low-fat) or reduced-fat dairy products.

## **Nuts, Seeds and Legumes**

Legumes (beans) are high in protein, minerals and fiber. They also have no cholesterol and very little fat. Nuts and seeds have protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

- Add beans to your soups, salads and pasta dishes.
- Try nuts (unsalted) in your salads, stir-fries or stirred into yogurt. A serving size is a small handful.

# Understanding the Nutrition Facts Label

Look for the Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods. It can help you know what's in your food and make healthier choices. Here are some tips for making the most of the Nutrition Facts label:

1. Start with the Serving Size.
2. Next, check total Calories per serving.
3. Limit Saturated Fat, *Trans* Fat and Sodium.
4. Get enough of these nutrients.
5. Quick guide to % Daily Value: 5% or less is low; 20% or more is high.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g) Servings Per Container about 2	
<b>Amount Per Serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b> 250	Calories from Fat 110
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g	<b>18%</b>
Saturated Fat 3g	<b>15%</b>
<i>Trans</i> Fat 3g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg	<b>10%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 470mg	<b>20%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g	<b>10%</b>
Dietary Fiber 0g	<b>0%</b>
Sugars 5g	
<b>Proteins</b> 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories: 2,000    2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g    80g
Saturated Fat	Less than 20g    25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg    300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg    2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g    375g
Dietary Fiber	25g    30g

For educational purposes only. This label does not meet the labeling requirements described in 21 CFR 101.9.

## Look for the Heart-Check Mark

The American Heart Association can help you make smarter choices when grocery shopping. Look for products with the Heart-Check mark throughout the grocery store. It looks like this:

You can visit [heartcheckmark.org](http://heartcheckmark.org) for more information and a list of certified foods.



## Step Two: **Eat Fewer Nutrient-Poor Foods**

Many people use up their daily allotment of calories (or more!) on nutrient-poor foods and beverages. Examples can include processed snack foods, commercially baked or fried foods, and sodas and other drinks high in added sugars.

Use the following tips to cut down on unhealthy foods and drinks.

### **Limit Unhealthy Fats**

Choose foods low in saturated and *trans* fats. These fats are often found in meat and dairy foods. They're also found in products that are commercially baked or fried. Cutting back on these foods can reduce your risk for heart disease by lowering "bad" (LDL) cholesterol in your blood.

- Avoid foods containing partially hydrogenated oils. This will reduce your intake of *trans* fat.
- Replace hard (stick) margarine or shortening with liquid vegetable oils and soft (tub) margarine.
- Limit cakes, cookies, crackers, pastries, pies, muffins, doughnuts and french fries. They're often made with partially hydrogenated or saturated fats.
- Choose poultry, fish, beans and legumes instead of red meats that can be higher in saturated fat.

## Limit Added Sugars

Many snack foods and drinks have added sugars, so the calories add up quickly. These items tend to be low in vitamins, minerals and other important nutrients. They also may not make you feel full. This could tempt you to eat and drink more than you need and gain weight.

Naturally occurring sugars are found in foods such as fruit and milk. “Added sugars” refers to sugars and syrups added to foods during processing, preparation or at the table.

- Some examples of added sugars are: sucrose, glucose, fructose, maltose, dextrose, syrups, high-fructose corn syrup, molasses, concentrated fruit juice and honey.
- Read the ingredient list on packaged foods. Choose items that don't have a lot of added sugars in them.
- Most American women should eat no more than 100 calories per day of added sugars. Most men should eat no more than 150 calories per day. This is about 6 teaspoons/day for women and 9 teaspoons/day for men.



## Limit Sodium

Reducing the amount of sodium you eat can lower your risk of high blood pressure. It may also help you manage it.

- Compare the nutrition labels of similar products and choose the one with the least amount of sodium.
- Prepare food at home to have more control over the amount of sodium you eat.
  - Reduce and replace some or all of the salt you use in cooking or at the table with herbs, spices, citrus juice or flavored vinegars.
  - Request foods prepared with less salt when dining out.
  - Limit salty condiments and snacks, including soy sauce, steak sauce, Worcestershire sauce, flavored seasoning mixes, pickles and olives.
- Drain and rinse canned foods such as tuna, vegetables and beans to remove some of the sodium.
- Most people should aim to eat no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.

## Drink Alcohol Only in Moderation

If you drink, limit yourself to one drink per day if you are a woman and two drinks per day if you are a man.

- One drink is equal to 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1½ ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.
- If you don't drink, don't start. Alcohol contains calories without a lot of nutrients. It can also be addictive and heavy drinking may damage organs such as the liver or heart.

## Pay Attention When Eating Out

Restaurant meals can be high in saturated fat, *trans* fat, added sugars, sodium and calories. They can also be low in fiber, vitamins and minerals.

- Keep portions small. Split an entrée with your dining partner or take half home for another meal.
- Ask for sauces and dressings on the side. Pick dressings made with vinegar, vegetable oils, citrus juices and herbs.
- Choose foods that have been grilled, roasted, baked, steamed or poached. Avoid fried foods and heavy sauces made with cream or cheese.
- Add a side vegetable or salad to help you feel full.
- Choose fruit for dessert. Save traditional desserts for special occasions and share them with your dining partners.

## Step Three: **Burn Up the Calories You Eat**

There's no big secret to avoiding weight gain—just use up at least as many calories as you eat and drink every day. Read the table on the next page to see how many calories you should be eating to maintain your weight. It's based on your age, gender and level of physical activity. Be sure to read the footnotes on types of lifestyles.

The calorie ranges allow for the needs of people in different age groups. Adults need fewer calories at older ages. An active 31-year-old man needs about 3,000 calories. But an active 50-year-old man only needs about 2,800 calories.



Gender	Age (Years)	Activity Level and Estimated Calories Burned		
		Sedentary <sup>1</sup>	Moderately Active <sup>2</sup>	Active <sup>3</sup>
Female*	19–30	1,800-2,000	2,000-2,200	2,200-2,400
	31–50	1,800	2,000	2,200
	51+	1,600	1,800	2,000-2,200
Male	19–30	2,400-2,600	2,600-2,800	3,000
	31–50	2,200-2,400	2,400-2,600	2,800-3,000
	51+	2,000-2,200	2,200-2,400	2,400-2,800

<sup>1</sup>Sedentary means your lifestyle includes only the light physical activity of typical day-to-day life.

<sup>2</sup>Moderately active means your lifestyle includes physical activity equal to walking about 1.5 to 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour. This is in addition to the light physical activity of typical day-to-day life.

<sup>3</sup>Active means your lifestyle includes physical activity equal to walking more than 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour. This is in addition to the light physical activity of typical day-to-day life.

*\*These recommendations do not apply to women who are pregnant or nursing.*

## Be Physically Active Every Day

Regular physical activity can help you reach physical and cardiovascular fitness. It can help control your weight and improve your blood pressure and blood sugar levels. It also lowers your risk of other chronic diseases. These include type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, depression, and breast and colon cancer.

*Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity or at least 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week.\* Add moderate- to high-intensity muscle strengthening activity at least 2 days per week for additional health benefits.*

- If you can't find 30 minutes, add up several 10-minute sessions during the day.
- Keep track of your activities to see how much you do versus how much you need.
- Cut down on your "screen" time (watching TV, surfing the Web and playing computer games).

### Other Benefits of Physical Activity

- Your weight is easier to control when you're physically active.
- Meeting activity goals can help you make other lifestyle changes, such as better eating habits.
- You may have more confidence and energy, and look and feel better when you're active.
- Physical activity is a great way to release stress!
- You'll serve as a good role model for other family members and friends.

*\*To learn more about our guidelines and scientific statements, visit [heart.org/statements](http://heart.org/statements).*

# How Much Are You Burning?

This table will give you an idea of how many calories you can burn at your current weight in 30 minutes of continuous activity.

**Calories Used in 30 Minutes by Activity and Weight**

Activity	150 pounds	200 pounds
Bicycling, 6 mph	126	167
Bicycling, 12 mph	305	406
Gardening	136	181
Hiking	190	253
Jogging at 7 mph	394	525
Swimming, 25 yds/min	208	277
Playing tennis (singles)	287	382
Walking at 2 mph	100	134
Walking at 4.5 mph	251	334

*Source: Adapted from ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription, Ninth Edition and the 2011 Compendium of Physical Activities: a second update of codes and MET values. Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise, 2011;43(8):1575-1581*

## Step Four: **Avoid Tobacco Products**

There's no doubt about it. Using tobacco products and being exposed to second-hand smoke increases your risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer and other major illnesses.

- If you smoke, make a plan to stop. Keep track of when and why you light up. Be aware of the situations and places that make you want a cigarette. Try to change what you are doing to avoid those triggers.
- Find out what distracts you when you want a cigarette. Take a walk or wash your hands or start a conversation. Do whatever works best to redirect your attention.
- Keep other things around to keep your mouth and hands busy. Try carrot and celery sticks, nuts and seeds, or sugar-free mints and gum.
- Carry a pencil or paper clip to keep your hands busy.
- For more quit-smoking resources, visit **heart.org**.



## For **More Information**

We want people to experience more of life's precious moments. It's why we've made better heart and brain health our mission.

*Life is why*<sup>TM</sup> we have created many educational booklets like this to help you and your family make healthier choices to reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Everyone has a reason to live a longer, healthier life. **What's the "why" in your life?**

Whatever your why, we encourage you to write it down here. Look back at your "why" often, and use it to inspire you as you work to live a longer, healthier life.

\_\_\_\_\_ is why.

Visit **mylifecheck.heart.org** and complete our My Life Check<sup>®</sup> assessment and get your personal heart score and a custom plan with the seven steps you may need to improve your heart health.

To learn more, call us toll-free at **1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721)** or contact your nearest American Heart Association office. You can also visit our Web site, **heart.org**.

For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653)** or visit us online at **strokeassociation.org**.

## Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Here are some of the signs that can mean a heart attack is happening.

- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath.** This may occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs.** These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

## Stroke Warning Signs

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, or trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness or loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

**F.A.S.T.** is an easy way to remember how to recognize a stroke and what to do. Spot a stroke **FAST**. **F**ace drooping. **A**rm weakness. **S**peech difficulty. **T**ime to call 9-1-1.

## Dial 9-1-1 Fast

Heart attack and stroke are life-or-death emergencies—every second counts. If you suspect you or someone you are with has any of the symptoms of heart attack or stroke, **immediately call 9-1-1 or your emergency response number** so an ambulance can be sent. **Don't delay—get help right away!**

**For a stroke**, also note the time when the first symptom(s) appeared. If given within three hours of the start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug may improve the chances of getting better faster.

Cut along dotted line and keep



For heart- or risk-related information,  
call the American Heart Association at  
**1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721)**  
or visit us online at [heart.org](http://heart.org).

For stroke information, call our American Stroke  
Association at **1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653)** or visit  
[strokeassociation.org](http://strokeassociation.org). For information on life after stroke,  
call and ask for the Stroke Family Support Network.

The statistics in this brochure were up to date at publication.  
For the latest statistics, see the Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics  
Update at [heart.org/statistics](http://heart.org/statistics).



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