

Preventing Heart Disease Through Lifestyle Changes and Early Detection



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Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, claiming 1 in every 4 lives each year¹. Here is the good news—much of this is preventable. Taking care of our hearts is not just about avoiding illness, it is an act of self-love, a way to honor our lives and strengthen our communities.

Understanding Heart Disease and Hypertension

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is one of the biggest risk factors for heart disease, stroke, and kidney problems². It is often called “the silent killer” because most people do not feel sick until serious complications occur³. In fact, about 75 million adults—1 in 3 Americans—have high blood pressure, and nearly half do not have it under control⁴.

This is especially concerning in communities where access to health care, nutritious food, and safe places to exercise can be limited. That is why awareness and prevention are so important and why Community Health Workers (CHWs) play a vital role.

Early Detection: Knowing Your Numbers Saves Lives

Since high blood pressure often has no symptoms, the only way to know if it is a problem is to check it regularly³. Blood pressure machines are available in many pharmacies and some health centers.

Early detection means early action. With timely care, lifestyle changes, and sometimes medication, people can manage their blood pressure and prevent more serious health issues later.

The Power of Prevention: Small Lifestyle Changes That Matter

Taking control of heart health does not have to mean huge changes all at once. Simple steps can add up.

Eat for your heart: Choose fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-sodium foods. Limit processed foods and sugary drinks.

Get moving: Aim for at least 90 to 150 minutes of physical activity each week like walking, dancing, or even chores that get your body moving⁵.

Avoid tobacco and limit alcohol to protect your heart and lungs.

Watch your weight and reduce stress where possible.

Know your numbers: Use a home blood pressure monitor if available or visit a clinic or pharmacy for screenings.

These actions do not just lower blood pressure; they improve your overall well-being⁵.





Community Health Workers: Heart Health Helpers

CHWs are trusted members of the communities they serve. They have the knowledge and community connections to educate people about hypertension, support lifestyle changes, and help connect individuals to care and resources. Because they understand the value of person-directed care, they make confusing health information easier to understand⁶.

Programs led by CHWs have been proven to:

- Improve blood pressure control in patients
- Support healthy eating, physical activity, and weight loss
- Increase patient knowledge and confidence to make lasting changes⁷

More than just sharing information, CHWs listen and provide guidance on topics like nutrition, exercise, recognizing heart attack symptoms, and managing diabetes and high blood pressure⁹.



Taking the First Step: Your Heart, Your Life

Preventing heart disease starts with small steps: choosing water instead of soda, taking a walk after dinner, or checking your blood pressure this week. These acts of self-care ripple out to benefit families and entire communities.

If you are a CHW, support your clients with tools, education, and hope. If you are reading this for yourself, know that change is possible and you do not have to do it alone.

Key Takeaways for a Healthier Heart

- ♥ **Heart disease is preventable.** Small lifestyle changes like healthier eating, regular activity, and stress management can significantly reduce your risk.
- ♥ **High blood pressure often has no symptoms.** Regular checks are essential for early detection and prevention.
- ♥ **Community Health Workers make a difference.** CHWs provide trusted support, education, and care to help people stay on track.
- ♥ Programs like Su Corazón, Su Vida show that **tailored, community-based efforts work.**

Caring for your heart is an act of self-love, and a step toward a stronger, healthier community. Start small, stay consistent, and remember: *your heart matters.*

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