



**Wellness Guide** BY HEALTH FOR ALL

SPRING 2025

# SPRING INTO HEART HEALTH:

*Renew. Refresh. Revive*

## CAN SUPPLEMENTS ACTUALLY IMPROVE HEART HEALTH?

What the research suggests

## 8 COMMON NUTRITION MYTHS

making food choices that work for you

## START A WALKING GROUP

Bryan and College Station Walking Trails

## WHAT ARE THE EARLY SIGNS OF HEART DISEASE?

The signs can include fatigue, feelings of depression or anxiety, and changes in your nails or skin.

## LIFESTYLE CHANGES THAT IMPROVE HEART HEALTH

Recommendations from Dr. Nancy Dickey



# Can Supplements Actually Improve Heart Health?

## *What the research suggests:*

A recent article from Health.com examines the effectiveness of dietary supplements in enhancing heart health. Despite the widespread belief—held by 97% of Americans—that supplements can improve cardiovascular well-being, medical experts caution that scientific evidence supporting this claim is limited.

According to a Cleveland Clinic survey, 38% of respondents take supplements specifically for heart health, with multivitamins, vitamin D, and fish oil being the most common choices. However, cardiologists emphasize that while certain supplements like fish oil, CoQ10, and folic acid may offer some benefits, **they should not replace prescribed medications or lifestyle modifications.**

The article underscores that the most effective strategies for maintaining heart health include regular physical activity, a balanced diet, stress management, and adherence to medical advice. Relying solely on supplements without these foundational practices may not provide the desired protective effects against heart disease.

**MYTHS**

**FACTS**

## 8 Common Nutrition Myths

Mainstream nutrition advice often overlooks your unique dietary needs and personal health goals.

Many diets recommend cutting out specific foods or entire food groups without recognizing how those items may actually support your well-being.

Believing common nutrition myths can lead to confusion and discouragement, making it harder to make informed food choices that truly suit you.





## #1 Carbs Are the Enemy

Many popular nutrition trends label carbohydrates as harmful, but that's a misconception. Carbohydrates are actually a vital energy source for the body.

However, it's important to distinguish between types of carbs. While sugary snacks are high in carbohydrates but low in nutrients, healthier options like fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and whole grains provide essential vitamins and minerals.

Eliminating carbs from your diet entirely can leave you feeling low on energy and lacking key nutrients. Over time, strict carb restriction may also contribute to problems like poor blood sugar regulation, heart issues, and even weight gain.

## #2 Eating at Night Makes you Gain Weight

The belief that eating at night leads to weight gain is a common nutrition myth. Your body doesn't suddenly store more fat just because you eat later in the day—weight gain results from consistently consuming more calories than you burn, regardless of when you eat.

Avoiding food during certain hours solely for weight loss can actually backfire by making it harder to meet your nutritional needs. Skipping nighttime meals may also lead to overeating in the morning due to increased hunger.

Instead of focusing on the clock, aim to eat balanced, nutrient-rich foods with fiber, protein, and healthy fats. These choices can support restful sleep and help you avoid overeating later.





### #3 *Gluten-Free Foods Are Healthier*

Many people assume that gluten-free foods are healthier by default, but that's not necessarily the case. These products can be just as high in fat, sugar, and calories as their gluten-containing counterparts—and they may lack key nutrients.

For individuals with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity, gluten-free choices are essential.<sup>5</sup> However, for most people, foods with gluten provide important sources of fiber and vitamins that support overall health. Choosing gluten-free should be based on medical need, not health trends.

### #4 *All Calories Are the Same*

Many people think all calories are the same and that managing weight is simply about balancing how many you eat and burn. But in reality, the source of your calories matters.

Nutrient-dense foods like fruits and vegetables offer more vitamins, minerals, and health benefits compared to the same number of calories from processed snacks or sweets.

Focusing only on calorie counts can lead to nutrient gaps in your diet. For better overall health, it's important to choose foods that nourish your body—not just ones that help you hit a calorie target.





## #5 *Skipping Meals Helps you Lose Weight*

When you skip meals, your body can react by entering a "starvation mode," conserving energy and storing fat, which may slow your metabolism over time and make weight loss more difficult.

Missing meals can also lead to intense hunger later, increasing the risk of overeating at your next meal. Studies suggest that eating smaller, well-balanced meals throughout the day helps maintain steady energy and reduces the urge to overeat.

Keep in mind that weight loss isn't one-size-fits-all. It's best to consult with a registered dietitian to create a meal plan tailored to your unique needs and goals.

## #6 *All Processed Foods Are Bad*

While some processed foods are high in fat and sodium compared to fresh, whole options, that doesn't mean all processed foods are unhealthy.

Certain processed items, like frozen vegetables, offer convenience and nutrition, making it easier to prepare balanced meals quickly.

Cutting out all processed foods can make it challenging to maintain a realistic and enjoyable diet. Instead of avoiding them completely, aim for a balanced approach—choosing nutritious options and practicing moderation.





## #7 *All Fats Cause Weight Gain*

The belief that all fats lead to weight gain is a common nutrition myth. In reality, there are both healthy and unhealthy types of fat.

Healthy fats—such as those in avocados, olive oil, and nuts—play an important role in helping you feel satisfied and supporting the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins. On the other hand, consuming large amounts of unhealthy fats, like those in fried foods and processed snacks, may contribute to weight gain over time.

Completely avoiding fat or a specific type of fat isn't a sustainable or necessary approach. The key is to make balanced food choices that support your health and allow you to enjoy your meals.

## #8 *You Should Avoid Sugar At All Costs*

Sugar has developed a bad reputation over the years, especially among those focused on health. However, the idea that all sugar should be completely avoided is a myth.

While excessive sugar consumption can lead to health issues, your body does need some sugar to function properly and maintain energy levels. Completely eliminating sugar may also mean missing out on essential nutrients.

Instead, aim to limit added sugars and focus on natural sources of sugar found in nutrient-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and dairy products.



# HOW TO START A WALKING GROUP

Starting a walking group is a great way to build community, support healthy habits, and encourage social connection.

Here's a step-by-step guide:

## 1. Define Your Purpose and Audience

- Decide why you're starting the group: health, socialization, mental well-being, fundraising, etc.
- Identify who it's for: all ages, seniors, coworkers, neighbors, etc.

## 2. Choose a Time and Location

- Pick consistent days and times (e.g., Saturdays at 8 AM).
- Select safe, accessible routes (parks, neighborhoods, school tracks).
- Consider parking, restrooms, shade, and lighting.

## 3. Set the Pace and Duration

- Decide if you'll offer one pace (e.g., moderate) or break into groups.
- Start with shorter walks (20–30 minutes) and increase over time.

## 4. Recruit Members

- Invite friends, family, coworkers, or neighbors.
- Use social media, community bulletin boards, or apps like Meetup.
- Ask local clinics, libraries, or wellness centers to help spread the word.

## 5. Create a Communication Channel

- Use a group text, Facebook group, or WhatsApp to send updates.
- Share walk reminders, route changes, and celebrate milestones.

## 6. Make It Fun and Inclusive

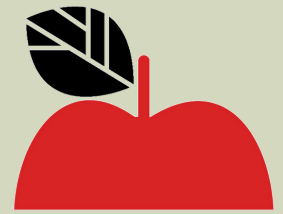
- Welcome everyone and be consistent.
- Offer themes (like "Wellness Wednesdays") or challenges (e.g., step counts).
- Allow time for casual conversation or reflection.

## 7. Ensure Safety

- Encourage wearing appropriate footwear.
- Carry water and a phone.
- If needed, have a basic first-aid kit and sunscreen available.

## 8. Track Progress

- Use a simple sign-in sheet, app, or spreadsheet to track attendance.
- Celebrate achievements like "10 walks" or "100 miles together."



## Join Us

Starting May 7, 2025, you can join the Health for All Walking Wednesday Group for fitness and fun.

This group is for beginners who are interested in improving their health in a group setting, enjoying the local parks and trails of the Bryan and College Station.

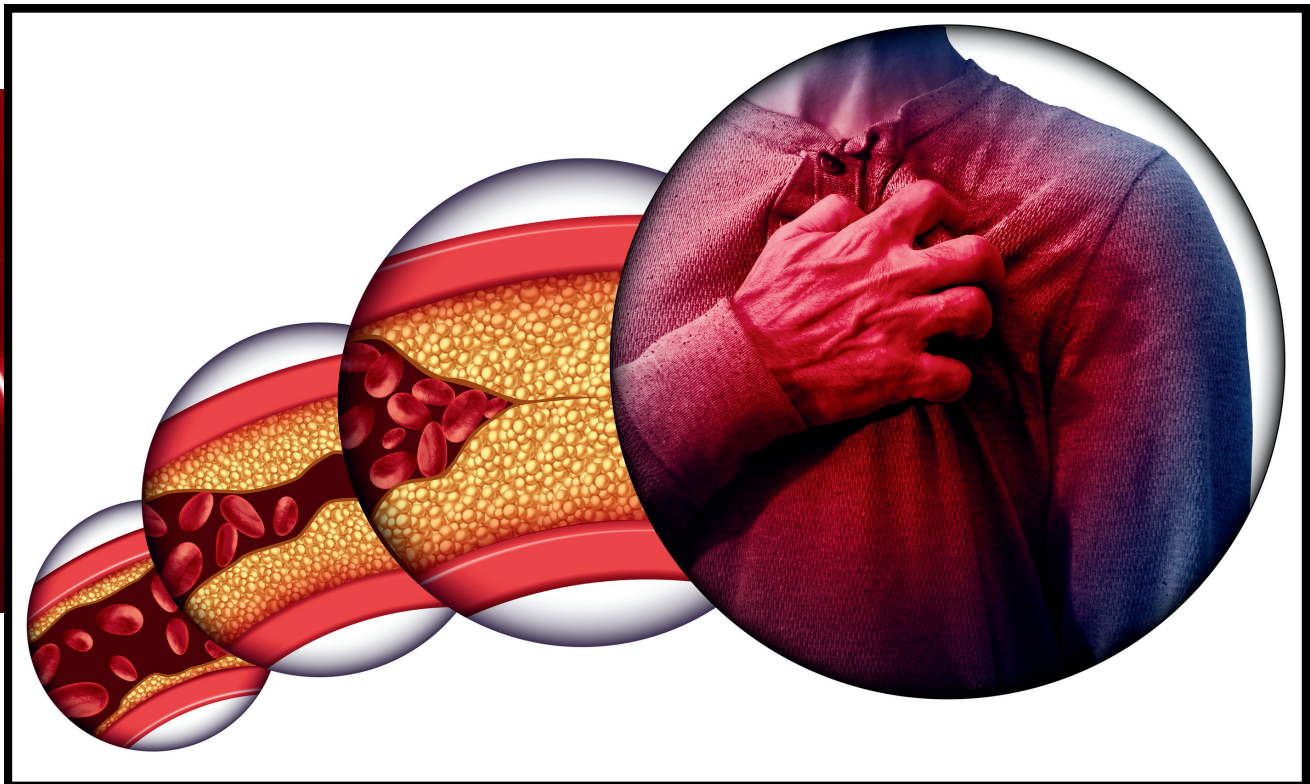
Please visit: [www.hlth4all.org](http://www.hlth4all.org) to sign up and for more information.



# Early Signs of Heart Disease

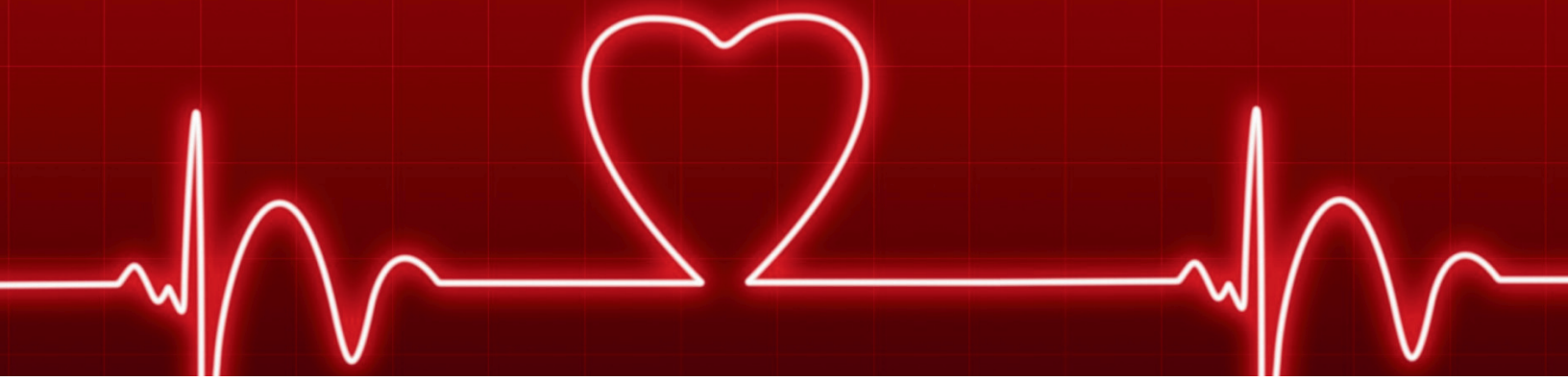
The body can sometimes give subtle warnings of heart disease—an umbrella term for conditions like heart failure and heart attacks. Early signs may include fatigue, changes in mood such as anxiety or depression, and noticeable shifts in your nails or skin.

Since heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, recognizing these early symptoms is crucial. Read on to discover potential warning signs and when it's time to consult a healthcare provider.



Heart disease is a collection of conditions affecting the heart and related to how blood flows to the heart. Those conditions can include:

- Blood vessel diseases like coronary artery disease (CAD)
- Issues with blood flow, leading to other problems like heart attacks, heart failure, and angina, which is chest pain due to decreased blood flow
- Problems with heart rate or the rhythm of your heartbeat, like arrhythmia



#### 1. Chest Pain or Discomfort (Angina)

- Description: A feeling of pressure, tightness, or squeezing in the chest. It may feel like indigestion and is often triggered by physical or emotional stress. It can indicate reduced blood flow to the heart.

#### 2. Shortness of Breath

- Description: Difficulty breathing during routine activities or while lying down. This can be a sign that your heart isn't pumping effectively, often associated with heart failure.

#### 3. Fatigue

- Description: Persistent tiredness or lack of energy even with adequate rest. This can occur when the heart is unable to pump enough blood to meet the body's needs.

#### 4. Palpitations

- Description: Sensation of a rapid, fluttering, or irregular heartbeat. Can be caused by arrhythmias or other heart rhythm issues.

#### 5. Swelling (Edema)

- Description: Swelling in the legs, ankles, feet, or abdomen due to fluid buildup. It can signal that the heart isn't pumping blood properly (often in heart failure).

#### 6. Lightheadedness or Dizziness

- Description: Feeling faint, dizzy, or like you might pass out. Can be linked to low blood flow, arrhythmias, or heart valve issues.

#### 7. Pain in Other Areas

- Description: Discomfort may radiate to the arms (especially the left), back, neck, jaw, or stomach. These are common in heart attacks, particularly in women.



**Seek immediate care for emergency signs like extreme shortness of breath and lasting chest pain.**

## 8. Anxiety or Depression

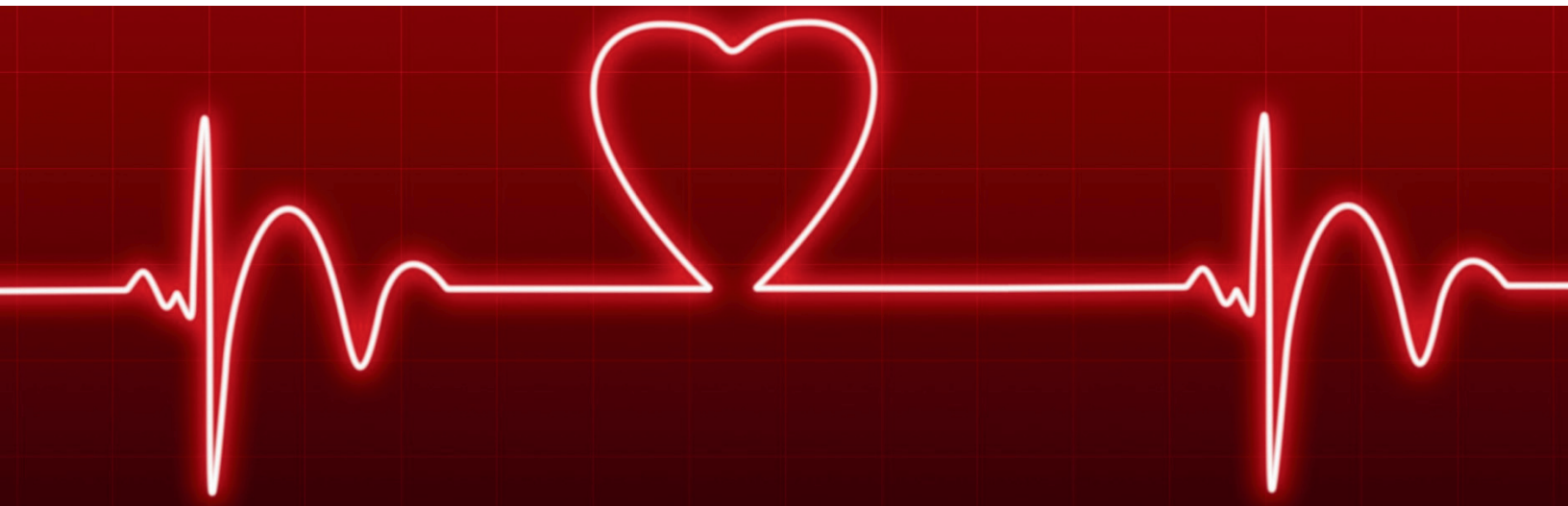
- Description: Unexplained emotional changes, such as feelings of doom or increased anxiety, can sometimes precede a cardiac event or reflect the burden of chronic heart issues.

## 9. Cold Hands and Feet

- Description: Poor circulation may result in cold extremities and could be a sign of heart disease or narrowed blood vessels.

## 10. Nail and Skin Changes

- Description: Blue-tinged skin (cyanosis), pale skin, or unusual nail curvature (clubbing) may point to long-term heart or circulation issues.



# What To Ask your Healthcare Provider

**For more information about heart disease, consider asking a healthcare provider some of the following questions:**

- Are there a certain number of symptoms I should have in order to have heart disease?
- What are my risk factors?
- How likely are skin and nail changes signs of heart disease?
- What tests will I need for a diagnosis?



# Lifestyle Changes that improve heart health

## 1. Eat a Heart-Healthy Diet

Focus on consuming more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats (Reducing saturated fats, trans fats, and added sugars helps lower cholesterol and blood pressure).

## 2. Get Regular Physical Activity

Engaging in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week can strengthen the heart, improve circulation, and help manage weight and blood pressure.

## 3. Maintain a Healthy Weight

Losing excess weight reduces the strain on the heart and helps control risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes.

## 4. Stop Smoking

Quitting tobacco use significantly lowers the risk of heart disease. Smoking damages blood vessels, raises blood pressure, and reduces oxygen in the blood.

## 5. Limit Alcohol Intake

Drinking alcohol in moderation (if at all) can help prevent high blood pressure, heart failure, and weight gain. For most adults, this means up to one drink per day for women and two for men.

## 6. Manage Stress

Chronic stress can raise blood pressure and contribute to unhealthy behaviors such as poor eating habits or smoking.

## 7. Get Quality Sleep

Aim for 7–9 hours of sleep per night. Poor sleep is linked to obesity, high blood pressure, and increased risk of heart problems.

## 9. Control Blood Sugar

Managing blood glucose is especially important for people with diabetes. Uncontrolled diabetes increases the risk of heart disease and damage to blood vessels.



# Live Well with Diabetes



**Join us from May 5, 2025 - June 23, 2025, from 6pm - 7pm on Monday Evenings at Health for All for nutrition classes. Visit our website for more detail and to sign up.**

## **Health For All**

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