

Self-care: A Healthy Heart For A Healthy Future

BY [Andre Reid](#) Posted [September 15, 2021](#)

World Heart Day on September 29 is an annual observance that is intended to increase public awareness of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), including their prevention and their global impact. Established in 1999 jointly by the World Heart Federation (WHF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), it was observed on the last Sunday in September, beginning September 24, 2000 until the year 2011. The new date of September 29, was commemorated by various world leaders with an aim to reduce the global mortality attributed to non-communicable diseases by 25% by the year 2025. The day's significance therefore is rooted in promoting proper care of the human body's most important organ, the heart.

Cardiovascular diseases are the most common cause of death globally with over 17 million deaths recorded worldwide since the early 2000s. The majority of these deaths were the result of coronary heart disease or stroke with more than 80 percent of deaths from these diseases occurring in low and middle-income developing countries. The primary causes of cardiovascular diseases generally are poor diet, lack of exercise and smoking, all of which are preventable. The current pandemic healthcare crisis we are experiencing, has also highlighted an urgent need to find different and innovative ways to connect people to heart health, particularly in lower resource areas and communities.

Harnessing the power of digital health to improve awareness, prevention and management of Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) globally is the goal for World Heart Day 2021. Over 520 million people worldwide living with CVD have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19 due to their increased vulnerability to more severe forms of the virus. This population has been told they are vulnerable, at-risk and should shelter in place, leading to missed medical appointments, reduced exercise as well as little or no contact with family or friends. Digital networks have the power to connect patients with families, friends, other patients, doctors and caregivers. No one should have to feel alone, pandemic or not, and the use of technology can help to overcome isolation and gaps in care.

The World Health Organisation predicts that 23.6 million people will die from cardiovascular diseases by 2030 and with Covid-19 still looming large over our lives, people with pre-existing heart conditions and comorbidities such as hypertension and diabetes have to be even more cautious. Despite heart disease being a leading cause of death, it is not inevitable. While you can't change some risk factors, like family history, sex or age, there are many ways to reduce your risk of heart disease. Devoting a little time every day to care for yourself can go a long way toward protecting the health of your heart. Simple self-care can be a great benefit, so here are a few of the practices you should indulge in to ensure you take proper care of your heart's health:

Avoid smoking or using tobacco products: Cigarette smoke reduces the oxygen in your blood, increasing your blood pressure and heart rate because your heart has to work harder to supply enough oxygen to your body and brain.

Start exercising between 30 to 60 minutes everyday: Regular daily exercise can lower your weight and risk of heart disease as well as your chances of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes.

Eat healthily for the heart: A healthy balanced diet helps protect your heart, improve your blood pressure and cholesterol, in addition to reducing your risk of type 2 diabetes. Avoid salt, sugar, processed carbohydrates and alcohol.

Maintain a healthy weight: Excess weight can lead to conditions including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes all of which can increase your chances of developing heart disease.

Get good quality sleep: Lack of proper sleep can harm your health. People who don't get enough sleep have a higher risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes and depression. Make sleep a priority in your life.

Manage stress: Some people cope with stress in unhealthy ways, such as overeating, drinking or smoking. Finding alternative ways to manage stress, such as physical activity, relaxation exercises or meditation, can greatly improve your health.

To prevent heart disease risks through self-care, you must have awareness, motivation, and confidence to follow self-care practices. Many barriers, including family and community influences, may deviate you from practicing healthy behavior. To maximize the effect of these self-care practices, they should become a part of your life. Healthy practices should be followed by everyone, irrespective of age. A healthy lifestyle is a continuous journey and not a destiny. Practice self-care for better health and a healthy heart.

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