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## You can be heart smart

February is American Heart Month. Did you know that cardiovascular disease (CVD) — including heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure — is the number one killer of women and men in the United States? Now is the time to learn about your risks for heart disease and take action to get heart smart.

### Small steps, big rewards

While your genetics can play a role in your health, you can control a number of risk factors for CVD. As you begin your journey to better heart health, keep these things in mind:

- Every healthy choice makes a difference. Even small steps can give you a healthier heart.
- Ask friends and family to join you. It's more fun and you'll likely be more successful.
- Keep at it. You may not be able to do everything at once.
- Reward yourself. Find fun things to do that are heart smart. Try taking a walk, joining a community group or cooking a healthy dinner.

### Pick up these habits for better heart health

Now that you've made a good start, here are ways to get even healthier:

- **Work with your health care team.** Get a checkup at least once each year, even if you feel healthy.
- **Check your blood pressure.** High blood pressure often has no symptoms, so be sure to have it checked on a regular basis.

- **Test your cholesterol.** Your health care team should test your cholesterol levels at least every five years.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Choosing more nutritious foods can help you avoid CVD. Try to get plenty of fruits and vegetables and limit your salt intake.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese can increase your risk for CVD.
- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity can help you reach a healthy weight and lower cholesterol and blood pressure. Adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week.
- **Don't use tobacco.** Tobacco use, especially cigarette smoking, greatly increases your risk for CVD. Quit using tobacco as soon as possible.
- **Manage your diabetes.** Be sure to monitor your blood sugar levels closely, and take all your medicine.

Your journey to a healthier heart can begin today. For more information and heart-smart resources, visit the Aetna Intellihealth® website [www.intelihealth.com](http://www.intelihealth.com).

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Available at [www.cdc.gov/features/heartmonth](http://www.cdc.gov/features/heartmonth). Accessed February 2, 2015.

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