

Mental Health and a Healthy Heart

Knowing and managing your health risks

What conditions put my heart at risk?

Mental and physical health go hand in hand.

People with mental health conditions have higher rates of the following health conditions that can affect the heart:

- High blood pressure
- Obesity
- Problems caused by smoking
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes

The conditions listed above increase your risk of heart problems, cardiovascular disease, or strokes later in life.

For a limited number of patients, some types of medications prescribed for mental health conditions can increase the long-term risk of weight gain, high cholesterol, or high blood sugar. It's important to know your own risk factors before treatment, so you can make a balanced decision as to the benefits and risks of taking these medications long-term.

Managing your risk factors is vital to your heart health.

Your mental health provider can help you assess your risk factors and learn ways to manage them to prevent heart disease.

How can I find out my risks?

Some basic tests can check to see if you have serious health conditions or have a higher risk of developing them.

They include:

- Blood pressure testing
- Height and weight check
- Smoking evaluation
- Blood cholesterol tests
- Blood glucose testing

These tests are all easy and safe — and can help identify problems that should be treated.



Some chronic health problems are more common among people with mental health conditions. For your heart health, it's important to find out whether you have any of these problems — and manage them if you do.

Inside this handout there is space to record your test results. The test results may come from your mental health provider, your primary care doctor, or may even be mailed to you. If you have questions about getting your test results, ask your mental health provider.

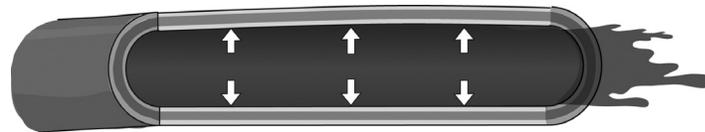
How can I manage my risks?

If the tests show you have any health risks, you should see a primary care doctor for further treatment. On the back of this handout (page 4), you'll find information about seeing a primary care doctor and a list of resources to help you learn more about your health.

Blood pressure testing

Blood pressure is the force of blood pressing against the walls of your arteries, like the pressure of water in a garden hose. Many people have **high blood pressure** (also called hypertension) without knowing it. This is why it is sometimes called the “silent killer.”

High blood pressure can strain your arteries and heart, and can restrict blood flow to and from other body organs. This can lead to heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and other problems.



My score

____/____

What it means for me

- Normal range: less than 120/80
- Pre-hypertension: between 120/80 and 140/90
- High (hypertension): 140/90 or higher

If your blood pressure is not in the normal range, you should see a doctor. You may need medication to manage your blood pressure. You can also help reduce your blood pressure by making lifestyle changes such as eating a healthy diet, increasing your activity, and quitting tobacco. See page 4 for information on treatment and resources to help you learn more.

Height and weight check

Carrying extra weight can increase your risk for diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Your healthcare provider will measure your height and weight, and may also calculate your **Body Mass Index (BMI)**. Your BMI is a formula that uses height and weight to predict your body fat.

If you're carrying extra weight, your doctor has tools and resources to help you get to a healthy weight and maintain it. See page 4.

My height

My weight

My BMI

What it means for me

- Underweight: BMI under 18.5
- Normal: BMI 18.5 to 24.9
- Overweight: BMI 25 to 29.9
- Obese: BMI 30 to 34.9 (high health risk)
- Highly obese: BMI 35 or over (very high health risk)

Smoking and tobacco use

Cigarette smoking greatly increases your risk of heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and emphysema. If you smoke or use tobacco, quitting is one of the most important ways you can improve your health. A year or two after you quit, your risks for these conditions will drop — in many cases by half. Eventually, your risk for these diseases will be the same as if you had never smoked at all. See page 4 for resources to help you.



Blood testing for cholesterol (lipid panel)

Cholesterol is a soft, waxy substance that carries digested fat from your liver to other parts of your body. Cholesterol and other fats travel together in your blood in packages called **lipoproteins**. Different types of lipoproteins play different roles in the health of your heart:

- **LDL cholesterol (“bad cholesterol”)** can build up and help form a substance called plaque in your arteries. Plaque can cause serious risks for your heart and other organs.
- **HDL cholesterol (“good cholesterol”)** can prevent or slow the buildup of plaque.
- **Triglycerides** are the most common type of fat in your blood. Studies show that many people with heart disease have high triglycerides.

My lipid panel scores and what they mean

Part	My score	Recommended levels
Total cholesterol <i>Lower is better.</i>		200 mg/dL or less is desirable.
LDL (“bad” cholesterol) <i>Lower is better.</i>		100 mg/dL or less is optimal.
HDL (“good” cholesterol) <i>Higher is better.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 mg/dL or more for men. • 45 mg/dL or more for women. • 60 mg/dL to protect against heart disease.
Triglycerides <i>Lower is better.</i>		150 mg/dL or less is normal.

If your **cholesterol is high**, you should see a doctor. You can lower your cholesterol by changing your eating habits, getting more exercise, and taking medications if your doctor prescribes them. See page 4 for more information on treatment and resources.

Blood glucose testing

The amount of **glucose (sugar) in your blood** varies throughout the day, but it should always stay within a certain range. If your blood glucose is above the normal range, you may have diabetes or you may be at higher risk for it. **Diabetes** is a disease that causes your blood glucose to be too high. It can damage your blood vessels and increase your risk for heart attack, stroke, and other health problems.

To check for diabetes — or pre-diabetes, a condition that often leads to diabetes — you should have a **fasting blood glucose test**. This test checks your blood sugar when you haven’t eaten anything for at least 8 hours, usually overnight. **You might also have a blood test called HbA1c**, a single test which can measure your average blood glucose over a period of several weeks.

If your **blood glucose is above the normal range based on either test**, you should see a doctor. Medication — along with a meal plan, regular exercise, and other healthy habits — can help you manage your blood glucose and prevent further problems. See page 4 for more information.



My fasting blood glucose

What it means for me

- Normal: 70 to 99 mg/dL
- Above normal (pre-diabetes): 100 to 125 mg/dL
- High (diabetes): Over 125 mg/dL

My HbA1c score

What it means for me

- Normal: 4% to 6%
- Above normal (pre-diabetes): 6% to 6.5%
- High (diabetes): Over 6.5%

Managing your risks

If your tests show you have one or more health risks, it's important to see a doctor and get started on a treatment plan.

- If you have a primary care doctor and you have an appointment scheduled** in the next few months, bring this sheet with the test results to your appointment. Your primary care doctor can do further testing, if needed, and get you started on a treatment plan.
- If you have a primary care doctor but you *do not* have an appointment scheduled**, be sure to make an appointment. Bring this sheet with the test results. Your primary care doctor can get you started on a treatment plan.
- If you *do not* have a primary care doctor**, your mental health provider can refer you to a clinic or doctor. See the information below. Make an appointment and be sure to bring these test results to the appointment.

Notes from your mental health provider:

Learning more

Intermountain Healthcare has many resources to help you learn more about your health risks — and how to manage them. You can ask your doctor about the resources below, or find them on the web.



- **High blood pressure.** Intermountain's *BP Basics* booklet explains what it is and what to do.
- **High blood glucose (pre-diabetes).** You may have high blood glucose, but not high enough for it to be considered diabetes. Now is the time to get your blood glucose under control. The handout *Pre-Diabetes: Act Now to Protect Your Health* can get you started.
- **Diabetes.** If you're just starting with diabetes treatment, Intermountain's *First Steps if You've Just Been Diagnosed with Diabetes* is helpful. If you've been dealing with diabetes for awhile, *Living Well: A Diabetes Care Handbook* can help.
- **Cholesterol.** If you have high cholesterol, the fact sheet *Understanding Cholesterol* is for you.
- **Weight.** If you need to lose weight, the booklet *A Weigh to Health* has proven principles for weight management and tips for success. The Weigh to Health Nutrition Program provides classes and coaching to help you succeed.
- **Smoking and tobacco use.** Quitting tobacco can be difficult, but at least 46 million Americans have done it. So can you. In *Quitting Tobacco: Your Journey to Freedom*, you'll find the information you need to focus your efforts and become tobacco-free for life.

Finding resources on the web

You can find all these resources on the web. Go to: intermountainhealthcare.org/health/topics and use the search box to search for a topic. Or, use the letter menu to browse topics. For example, choose **D** for diabetes or **W** for weight management.