

Health Check

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Make Heart Health a Priority at Any Age



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February is American Heart Month, and it's a good time to take a step toward better heart health.

If you're in the dark about your overall heart health, start by scheduling a visit with your primary care provider. They can check your blood pressure, order labs, discuss your lifestyle, and help you decide what to do next.

If you know you could improve your heart health and have been struggling to take that first step, make it simple. Try adopting one healthy habit to start. If you're not sure what to do, or you want to be certain you're taking your health history into account, make an appointment with your doctor.

Common heart disease factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, not getting enough physical activity, excess weight, and a family history of early heart disease.

Get started with a few steps you can take this week.

You don't have to do everything at once. Pick the one or two changes you feel most confident you can keep up, and start there.

- Ask your primary care provider about your numbers, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. If it's been a while, ask what your most recent results were and what range they want you in.
- Add a little movement most days. Start with a 10-minute walk, take a short stroll after dinner, and if you're sure it's safe, park farther away. Consistency matters more than intensity.
- If you use tobacco or vape, talk with your primary care provider about support for quitting. They can discuss nicotine replacement, prescription options, and counseling resources.
- If loud snoring or daytime sleepiness is a pattern for you, bring it up with your primary care provider. Ask if you should be checked for sleep apnea, since it's linked with high blood pressure.

Know when to see a specialist.

You don't have to wait for a big sign to see a specialist. Talking to your primary care doctor is a great place to start. They can help guide you and coordinate with Kelsey-Seybold specialists. Some of the symptoms or risk factors to be mindful of and promptly address with your primary care doctor or a cardiologist are:

- You have a history of heart disease in your family, especially at younger ages.
- You smoke or have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes.
- You have chest discomfort, shortness of breath, dizziness, fainting, or new swelling in your legs.
- You feel a racing, fluttering, or irregular heartbeat.

To schedule an appointment, call **713-442-7038**
or visit **MyKelseyOnline.com** to get started.