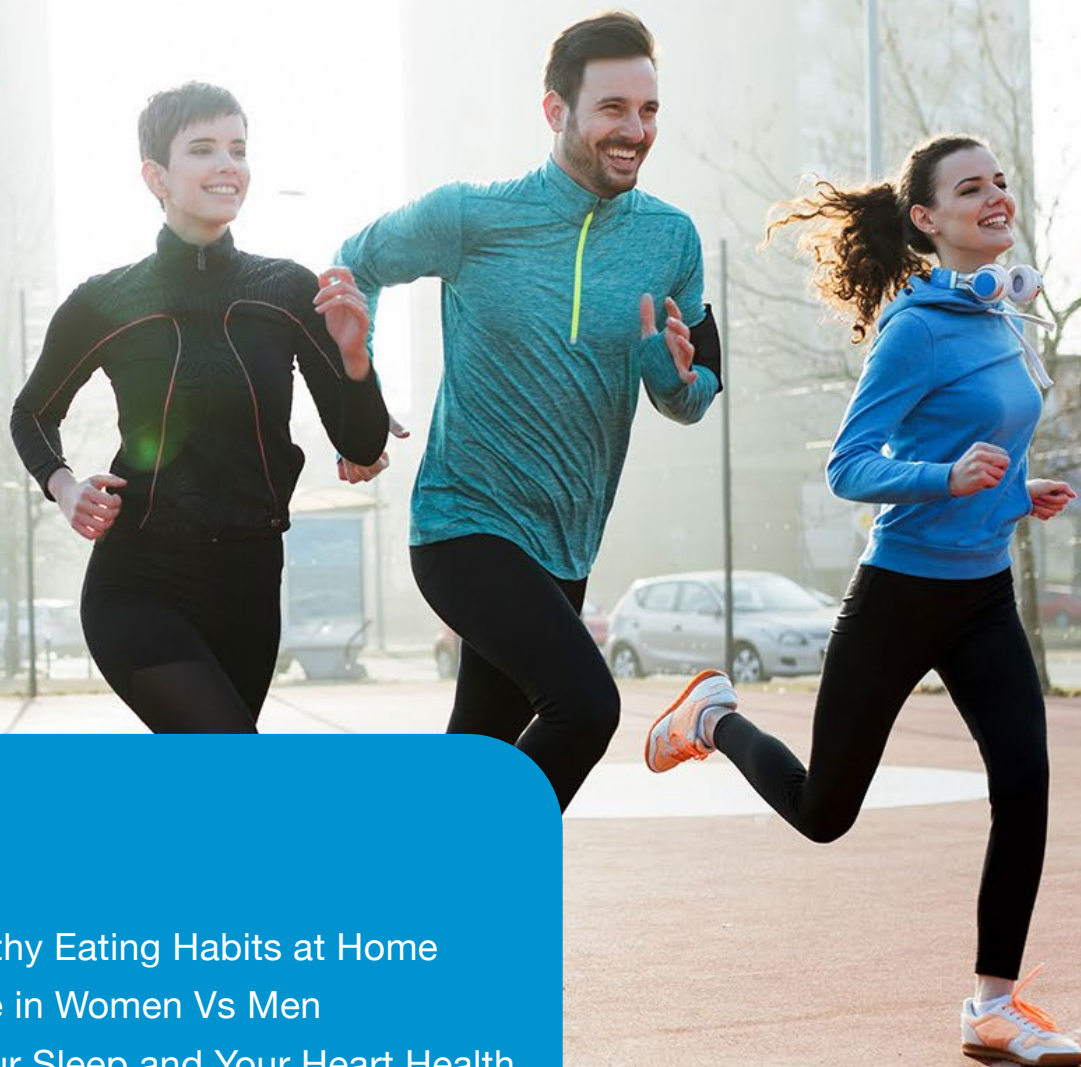


Fall 2023

# Heart Health

Improve your heart health with  
**Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama**



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## Building Healthy Eating Habits at Home

A healthy diet and lifestyle are essential for preventing and managing heart disease. Whole grains can provide fiber and nutrients for blood pressure and heart health. Vegetables and fruits offer vitamins and minerals that help prevent heart disease. Limiting processed foods, including sugary drinks and red meat, lowers cholesterol and reduces heart disease risk.

Eating healthy at home gives you control over your meals. You can choose healthier ingredients, avoid additives, and cook balanced meals tailored to your health needs. Developing healthy habits takes effort, but we are here to support you.

You can build healthy eating habits by making substitutions in your favorite recipes. Use lower-fat or no-fat ingredients when cooking at home.

	Substitutions	
1 cup of whole milk	➔	<b>Add a tablespoon of vegetable oil to one cup of fat-free or low-fat milk.</b>
1 cup of heavy cream	➔	<b>Use one cup of evaporated skim milk or a mixture of ½ cup low-fat yogurt and ½ cup plain, unsalted cottage cheese.</b>
1 tablespoon of butter	➔	<b>Use one tablespoon of soft margarine, or ¾ teaspoon of vegetable oil.</b>
1 ounce of unsweetened baking chocolate	➔	<b>Try three tablespoons of unsweetened cocoa powder or carob powder, plus one tablespoon of vegetable oil or soft margarine.</b>

**Staying in and eating at home can be enjoyable and healthy with simple steps. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions about eating healthy at home.**

# Heart Disease in Women vs Men

Did you know that over 60 million women (44%) in the US suffer from heart disease, the leading cause of death for women? Understanding heart disease and its signs, symptoms, and risks is essential for your health. Consult your healthcare provider if you have concerns about your heart's health. They can assess your risk and create a prevention plan.



Women and men share many of the same risk factors for developing heart disease. Some of the most common risk factors shared are:

- Obesity
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Family history

Women also have their unique risk factors, including:

- Relatively high testosterone levels prior to menopause
- Increasing hypertension during menopause
- Specific autoimmune diseases that are more common in women
- Higher levels of stress and depression

Women may not be aware of these additional risk factors, so staying educated and informed about your overall health is essential. You can take additional steps in your daily life to help reduce your risk and take control of your health, such as:



**Avoid smoking**



**Eating a healthy diet**



**Exercising several times a week**



**Being aware of your family history**

**If you have questions about your risk factors, don't wait.  
Reach out to your healthcare provider today.**

# Improving Your Sleep and Your Heart Health

Better sleep improves heart health. Sleep deprivation affects blood pressure, sugar, and cholesterol, increasing the risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

Adequate sleep safeguards heart health. It repairs the body, reduces inflammation, and regulates blood pressure and cholesterol hormones.

To enhance your sleep and heart health, create a relaxing environment, limit caffeine and alcohol, and establish a bedtime routine. Talk to your healthcare provider about any underlying sleep-related medical conditions, like sleep apnea or insomnia.



**There are many benefits to getting a good night's rest, including:**

- Stronger immune system
- Healing and repair of cells, tissues, and blood vessels
- Increased brain function
- Lower risk of developing chronic conditions

**Getting quality sleep can be challenging, but here are some healthy tips to improve your sleeping habits.**

- Relax before bed with a book, bath, or journaling
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and big meals before sleep
- Set a consistent wake-up and bedtime alarm
- Minimize phone usage before bed and avoid it in bed
- Activate "do not disturb" mode at night to avoid sleep disruptions from notifications

**Getting enough good sleep is essential for your heart's health and well-being. Aim for at least seven hours of quality sleep each night. If you have trouble sleeping, talk to your healthcare provider about improving your sleep.**



## Staying Active as the Weather Changes

Staying active is essential for your health. Exercise helps relieve stress, anxiety, and depression. It also maintains strength, stamina, and the ability to function correctly. The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week.

Being outdoors is a great way to get Vitamin D. Fall and winter can be great times to exercise outside, but it's essential to wear the proper clothes based on the temperature.

### Stay active and healthy despite the changing weather with these tips.

- **Make it fun.** Choose activities that you enjoy and that make you feel good.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of water and other fluids throughout the day.
- **Listen to your body.** Take a break or move to a different location if you feel cold or hot. Don't push yourself too hard.
- **Incorporate indoor activities into your routine.** There are many fun and challenging indoor activities that you can do, such as swimming, yoga, dancing, Pilates, or strength training.
- **Find an exercise buddy.** Having someone to exercise with can help you stay motivated and accountable.



**Don't let the changing weather get in the way of your fall fitness goals. Dress appropriately and be flexible with your workout routine to stay active no matter the weather.**



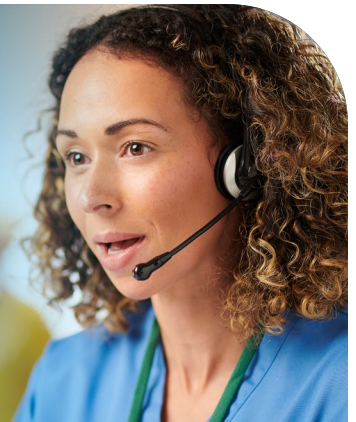
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## Talk to a Nurse

Eligible members have access to our **FREE** nurse phone lines.  
Call **1-888-841-5741** for more information.

[AlabamaBlue.com/TalkToANurse](http://AlabamaBlue.com/TalkToANurse)

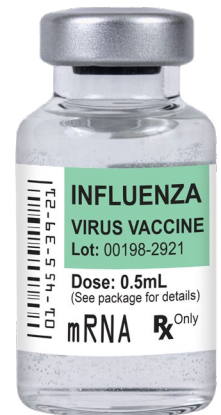


## This year, get the flu shot. **Not the flu.**

Did you know you don't have to visit a doctor for your flu shot?

Flu shots may be available at:

- Your favorite pharmacy
- Grocery stores near you
- Warehouse club stores
- The county health department
- Your neighborhood library



**Most places publicize this service with on-site banners or posts on their social media accounts or websites. Watch out for a convenient location in your area!**



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Information provided is not intended to replace medical advice from healthcare professionals.