Take a step toward heart-healthy eating

Healthy food choices can help your heart, even if you already have heart disease. You don’t have to change everything at once. Begin to move toward a more heart-healthy diet one step at a time.

Some changes you might try:

**Go for whole grains.** Choose whole-wheat breads, pastas and tortillas. Try oatmeal or other whole-grain breakfast cereals. Choose brown rice instead of white.

**Use a new cooking oil.** Liquid vegetable oils, like olive or canola oil, are better for you than butter or margarine.

**Cut back on salt.** Read nutrition labels to find foods low in sodium (another name for salt).

**Switch to low-fat dairy.** When you get used to low-fat dairy, try the nonfat versions next.

**Sip sugar-free drinks.** Make water taste better by adding lemon and ice.

**Choose leaner proteins.** Go for fish, skinless poultry or lower-fat ground meats. Trim fat from other meats.

**Plan one meatless meal a week.** Feature beans or make pasta with veggies.

Once you’ve mastered one of these changes, give another a try.

**Medicines matter too**
Lifestyle changes, like diet and exercise, are great tools to help protect your heart. If your doctor prescribes medicines, they’re just as vital. Be sure to take them exactly as your doctor tells you to.

Sources: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (www.eatright.org); American Heart Association (www.heart.org)

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If you would no longer like to receive this mailing, please call Member Services and ask for the Care Management Department.

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Contact us
Mercy Care, 4755 S. 44th Place, Phoenix, AZ 85040
Member Services: **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879**
(TTY: 711)
Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
24-hour nurse line: **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879**
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Get healthy after a heart attack

If you’ve had a heart attack, there are things you can do to get on the road to recovery and be healthier in the future.

Start by seeing your doctor as often as recommended. You’ll learn how to help your heart mend and lower your risk for another heart attack. These steps can also help:

- **Take your medicines.** Your medicines can help prevent future heart trouble. Learn what each medicine is for, and take it just as your doctor says.

- **Commit to quit.** If you smoke, ask your doctor for help quitting. It may take a few tries, but it’s one of the best things you can do for your heart.

- **Change your eating habits.** Focus on eating a variety of low-fat, heart-healthy foods. Ask your doctor if you need to cut back on sodium and added sugars.

- **Get active again.** Ask your doctor when and how to safely begin. It might be best to start with a supervised cardiac rehab program.

- **Tell your doctor how you feel.** You might feel sad, angry or scared after a heart attack. That’s understandable. But if how you feel starts to get in the way of your recovery, ask for help.

Source: American Heart Association (www.heart.org)

It’s not too late!

A yearly flu shot is the best way to protect yourself from the flu. The vaccine is safe and won’t cause the flu. If you haven’t had the flu shot yet, it’s not too late to get it. Ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)

Three questions to ask your doctor about opioids

Opioids can be dangerous when overused or abused. Before you take an opioid, ask your doctor:

1. Why do I need it?
2. What are the risks?
3. Are there safer options?

Ask about Narcan too. It’s a medicine that could save your life if you overdose.

Need help getting clean? To find treatment near you, call 1-800-662-4357.

Sources: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (www.samhsa.gov); U.S. Food and Drug Administration (www.fda.gov)

Did you know that you may be able to get Lifeline cell service plus a smartphone at no cost to you? Go to www.MercyCareAZ.org or call Member Services at 1-800-624-3879 (TTY: 711) and ask about the Assurance Wireless Lifeline program.

Caregivers: Seek the help you deserve

If you are a caregiver, ask your loved one’s care manager about their needed services as well as services you might need as a caregiver. For example, you may feel overwhelmed, sad or burned out. The care manager can provide information and referrals for support.