VALLEYHEALTH

Heart Lifestyle Choices: Practical Steps You Can Start Today

Healthy habits protect your heart as much as procedures or medicines. The good news: small daily choices add up.

Why Lifestyle Matters

- Lifestyle changes are the **biggest way** to improve heart health.
- Focus on what you can control: smoking, food choices, movement, sleep, and stress management.

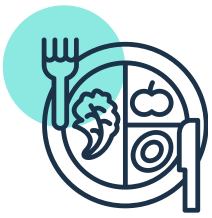
Stop Smoking

Quitting smoking is the single most powerful step you can take.

- **Set a quit date** and tell family or friends.
- **Clear your space:** remove cigarettes, vapes, lighters, and ashtrays at home, in the car, and at work.
- **Plan for cravings:** use quit lines, coaching, or approved medications.
- Every smoke-free day improves blood pressure, circulation, and lung function.

Eat for Your Heart

Think long-term lifestyle, not a short-term diet.



- **Build your plate:** fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, lean proteins, and fish.
- **Use healthy fats:** olive oil instead of butter or shortening.
- **Protein options:** poultry, fish, beans, tofu, yogurt. Eggs can fit a balanced plan.
- **Limit** consumption of fried foods, high-fat meats, added sugar, and oversized portions.
- Aim for a pattern similar to the **Mediterranean** style of eating.

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Move With Purpose

Exercise does not have to be fancy to work.

- Goal: **30 minutes of brisk activity, 5 days a week.** Fast walking counts.
- Walk fast enough that you can talk but not sing. If it feels too hard, back off a little and try again.
- If walking is limited, try **chair marches, hand grips, foot pumps, or water exercise.** The key is to **move** every day.

Managing Stress & Sleep

Healthy coping lowers blood pressure and improves mood.

- **Sleep:** aim for about **8 hours.** Go to bed and wake up at set times.
- **Stress tools:** activity, deep breathing, prayer, meditation, or yoga.
- Keep screens out of the bedroom and limit caffeine late in the day.

Make a Simple Plan

Set **SMART** goals you can keep.

- **Specific:** “Walk 15 minutes after dinner, Mon–Fri.”
- **Measurable:** track steps or minutes.
- **Achievable & Realistic:** start small and build.
- **Timely:** pick a start date and check progress weekly.

Heart symptoms can be serious, but early evaluation and coordinated care can make a real difference. Whether you need a first checkup or a second opinion, our team can help you understand your risks and plan next steps.

To learn more or schedule with Valley Health’s Heart and Vascular Center, visit valleyhealth.org.