



Know Your Health Tips

Use these succinct health tips to manage high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, and weight, and lead a more active lifestyle.

High Blood Pressure

1. Have your blood pressure checked regularly – knowing your numbers helps you stay in charge of your health.
2. Maintain a healthy weight range, based on your age and gender (as recommended by a physician).
3. Participate in a minimum of 30-60 minutes of moderately intense activity 5 times per week.
4. Reduce your salt intake, choosing reduced-sodium food options when available.
5. Take medications as directed and speak with your physician about any questions or concerns.
6. Reduce alcohol consumption, which constricts blood vessels and causes an increase in blood pressure.
7. Increase your potassium intake to help lessen the effects of sodium on blood pressure.
8. Avoid tobacco products, which cause blood pressure to increase.
9. Cut back on caffeine, which can increase blood pressure.
10. Take steps to reduce your stress outside of the fire station.

Cholesterol

1. Have your cholesterol levels checked regularly – knowing your numbers helps you stay in charge of your health.
2. Participate in a minimum of 30-60 minutes of moderately intense activity five times per week.
3. Avoid foods high in saturated fats, such as butter, margarine, and vegetable oil; choose healthier canola or olive oil instead.
4. Get more fiber in your diet to help lower your cholesterol.
5. Eat more fish, which is high in the cholesterol-combatting omega-three fatty acids.
6. Reduce alcohol consumption.
7. Choose nuts for a snack to help lower cholesterol (but look for them with reduced or no salt).
8. Quit using tobacco products, which can harden the arteries.
9. Check the food label to find out how much cholesterol it contains, plus which ingredients the cholesterol comes from.
10. Try swapping out your afternoon coffee for a fruit smoothie, which provides a natural source of energy while increasing your fiber intake.

Diabetes

1. Get screened for diabetes regularly – knowing your numbers helps you stay in charge of your health.
2. Manage your blood pressure and cholesterol as elevated levels are risk factors for diabetes.
3. Know your family history and discuss it with your doctor; diabetes can be passed genetically.
4. Make sure your physician knows that you are a first responder; high-stress situations can cause your body to produce more insulin, dangerously lowering your blood glucose levels.
5. Participate in a minimum of 30-60 minutes of moderately intense activity five times per week.
6. Stay hydrated by getting at least eight, eight-ounce servings (64 ounces) of water per day at minimum.
7. Eat regularly. Skipping meals can cause your blood glucose to drop, so keep healthy snacks at the station to keep you going during long shifts.
8. Maintain a healthy weight range, based on your age and gender (as recommended by a physician).
9. Quit using tobacco products, which can raise blood glucose levels, constrict blood vessels, and cause inflammation.
10. Try to get seven to eight hours of sleep per day to keep hormone levels balanced, which helps you resist unhealthy snacking.

Managing Weight

1. Talk to your physician to find out what a healthy weight and Body Mass Index is for you.
2. Read the food labels, checking for both total content of fat, cholesterol, sodium, and other potentially unhealthy components, as well as the ingredient list to see where these come from.
3. Limit alcohol consumption based on physician recommended amounts as determined by your individual health, gender, and weight.
4. Try eating five small meals a day rather than three big ones, which helps control hunger levels to avoid overeating.
5. Eat more fish, which is low in fat and high in cholesterol-combatting omega-3 fatty acids.
6. Choose leaner meats and poultry over the higher fat options, and remove the skins.
7. Bake, grill, or broil food instead of frying it.
8. Have multiple servings of vitamin- and fiber-full vegetables and fruits each day.
9. Choose healthy whole grain products to provide fiber and keep you feeling full longer.
10. Participate in a minimum of 30-60 minutes of moderately intense activity 5 times per week.

Active Lifestyle

1. Talk with your physician and have your blood lipid profile checked to determine if you should be more active based on your disease risk factors.
2. Participate in a minimum of 30-60 minutes of moderately intense activity five times per week.
3. Fit in exercise when you can by breaking it into multiple smaller sessions each day instead of all at once.
4. Aim for 150 minutes of cardio exercise per week. Any kind of consistent movement is beneficial.
5. Resistance training can help improve your numbers as well as range of motion, muscular strength, and endurance.
6. Being flexible helps you move – some flexibility exercises (stretching, yoga, or Pilates) can also help relieve muscle soreness and/or stress.
7. Try functional fitness training, which involves movements associated with everyday life and your fireground activities.
8. Incorporate fitness into firefighter training activities; for example, run multiple ‘reps’ of a drill dragging a hose or lifting equipment to burn more calories.
9. Fit in more exercise time at the station by challenging your fellow firefighters to a game of basketball or flag football.
10. Make exercise a family affair; spend your valued time at home on a family walk, hike, or bike ride.
11. Realize that every bit counts and the most important thing is to just get moving.

Sources: [American Diabetes Association](#), [American Heart Association](#), [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [Mayo Clinic](#), [Medline Plus – National Institutes of Health](#), [SleepFounding.org](#), [The American College of Sports Medicine](#), and [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#).