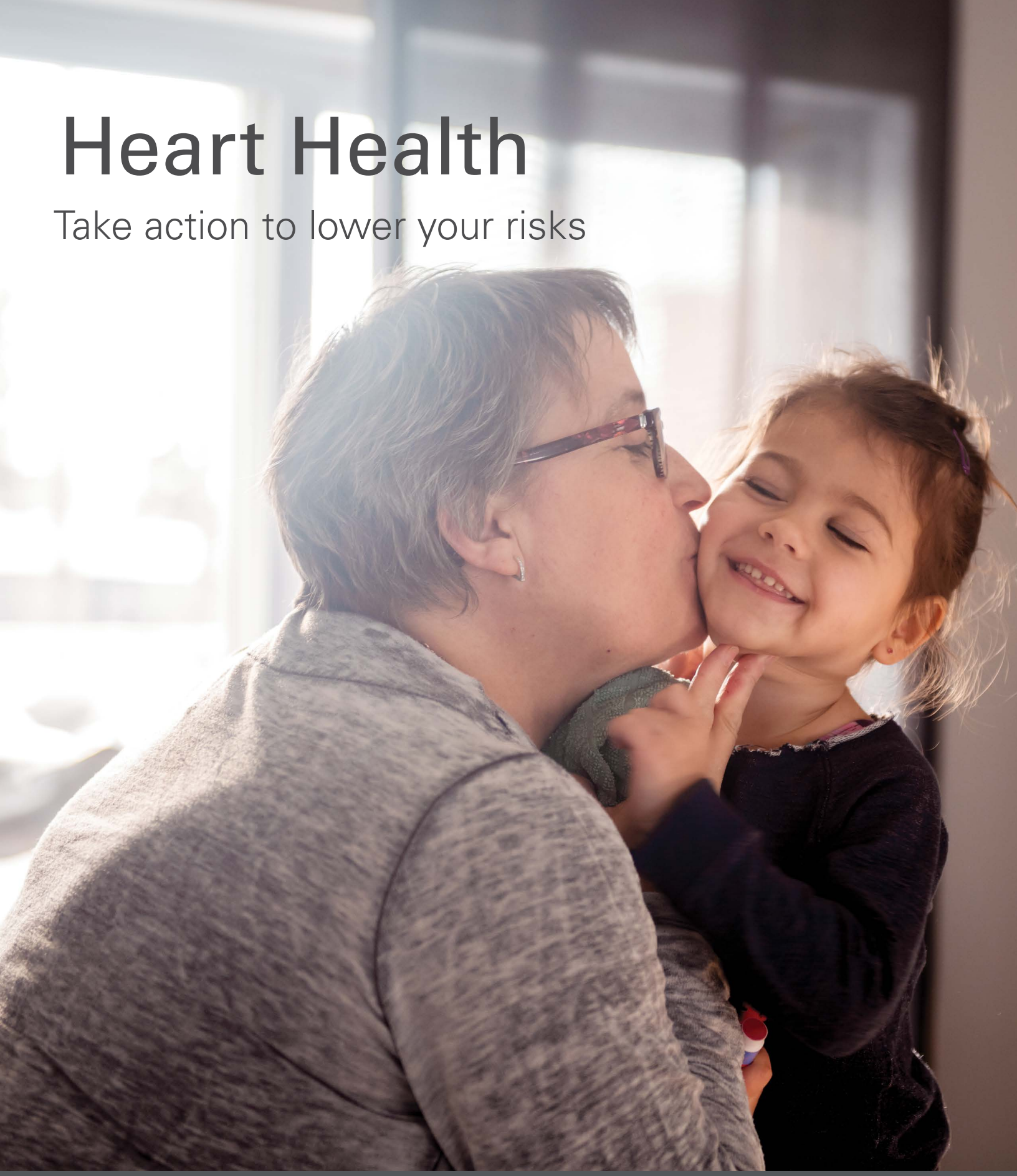
Heart Health

Take action to lower your risks



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What's so important about a healthy heart?

Your heart is made up of muscle, blood vessels and valves that work together to pump blood to all areas of your body. Common risk factors for heart disease include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high blood sugar levels, unhealthy body mass index (BMI) and a larger waist circumference. These conditions can cause damage to your heart, which can lead to serious health issues like a heart attack. Keep reading to learn what you can do to reduce your risk for developing heart disease.

What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance in the blood. Too much cholesterol can cause a sticky substance called plaque to build up in your blood vessels. Plaque can block blood vessels, which makes your heart work harder than it should. This can lead to heart attacks and strokes.

Most people with high cholesterol feel healthy. The only way to know if you have high cholesterol is to have it checked. You can get a simple blood test to check your cholesterol level. Work with your Primary Care Provider (PCP) to determine your cholesterol goals, and whether you should be taking a statin.

Cholesterol: The Good and the Bad

Lipoproteins carry cholesterol to and from cells in your body. Typical cholesterol tests measure the amount of two types of lipoproteins in your blood.

Low-density Lipoprotein (LDL)
LDL, the "bad" cholesterol, contributes to fatty buildups in arteries which prevents blood from flowing freely. This narrows the arteries and increases the risk for heart attack, stroke and peripheral artery disease.

High-density Lipoprotein (HDL)
Healthy levels of HDL, the "good" cholesterol, may protect against heart attack and stroke. HDL moves excess LDL cholesterol from your bloodstream to your liver, so it can be broken down and eliminated from the body.

Triglycerides

Triglycerides are the most common type of fat in the body. They store excess energy from your diet. A high triglyceride level combined with high LDL cholesterol or low HDL cholesterol increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Managing Your Cholesterol

- Try to include oatmeal, apples, prunes and beans in your diet. They are high in soluble fiber, which keeps your body from absorbing cholesterol.
- Get active! Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Adults should get 2.5 hours of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week. Please check with your PCP before starting an exercise program.
- Ask your PCP about what medication(s) you should take to lower your cholesterol.

Tell your PCP if there is a history of heart disease, heart attack or stroke in your family. Make an appointment today to discuss any questions or concerns you have. If you don't have a PCP, visit **ParamountHealthcare.com** and click on Find a Provider.
Or call Member Services at 1-800-462-3589.

Blood Pressure and Your Heart

High blood pressure (hypertension) is known as a silent killer because there are usually no signs or symptoms. A blood pressure level less than 120/80 is generally recommended for optimal heart health, but your healthcare provider might set a different goal for you based on your health history.

High blood pressure can lead to:

Heart Failure
The heart is not able to pump enough blood to meet the body's needs.

Heart Attack
The arteries bringing oxygen to the heart become blocked, leading to heart muscle damage.

Stroke
A blood clot blocks an artery carrying blood to the brain or an artery bursts, preventing blood flow to the brain.

Impaired Vision
Blood vessels in the eye break, causing blurred vision and even blindness.

Kidney Failure
Kidney blood vessels narrow so the kidneys cannot filter the blood properly, causing waste to circulate and build up in the bloodstream.

Understanding Blood Pressure Ranges

Use this chart to monitor your blood pressure readings. Don't forget to use the Track Your Numbers chart in the back of the book to track your readings over time.

				Stage 1	Stage 2	Consult your doctor immediately
		Normal	**Elevated**	**Hypertension**	**Hypertension**	**Hypertensive Crisis**
Category	**Systolic**	Less than 120	120–129	130–139	140 or higher	Higher than 180
		and	*and*	*or*	*or*	*and/or*
	Diastolic	Less than 80	Less than 80	80–89	90 or higher	Higher than 120

Recommendations provided by the American Heart Association.

Managing Your Blood Pressure

Maintain a healthy weight so your heart doesn't have to work harder. Your PCP or health care team can help you figure out if your weight is healthy for your age and body.

Eat a healthy diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low sodium foods and low-fat dairy products. Avoid saturated fats, found in butter, cheese, red meat and other animal-based foods.

Track your blood pressure. Your healthcare provider can help you determine how often your blood pressure should be checked, and if home blood pressure monitoring is right for you.

Take your medication(s) as prescribed. Ask your healthcare provider to explain what each medication does and how often to take it. If you have trouble remembering to take your medications, talk to your PCP or pharmacist.

Quit smoking. Nicotine increases your blood pressure and contributes to the hardening of the artery walls, increasing your risk for heart attacks. Call the Ohio Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) for help.

Get regular exercise. The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes per week of moderate physical activity, like walking, biking, swimming, water aerobics or dancing.

Manage your stress. Constant stress may raise your blood pressure. Talk to your doctor about stress management.

Get plenty of good sleep. Lack of quality sleep and conditions like insomnia or sleep apnea can lead to serious health conditions, such as high blood pressure and heart disease.

Manage your A1C if you have diabetes. Your risk of heart disease increases if you have diabetes, so it's important to keep your A1C levels below 7%.

Simple Steps for an Accurate Blood Pressure Reading

If you have high blood pressure, it's important to follow your PCP's orders to monitor your numbers. Here are some important items to be aware of before and during your blood pressure screening to get the most accurate reading.

Before Your Screening

- Do not smoke, drink caffeinated beverages or alcohol, or exercise 30 minutes before your screening.
- Empty your bladder.
- Make sure you are at rest for at least five minutes.

During Your Screening

- Sit in a chair with your back supported.
- Keep your legs uncrossed and your feet flat on the floor.
- Do not place the blood pressure cuff over any clothing.
- If the blood pressure cuff is too loose or too tight, be sure to tell the person taking your screening.
- Relax and do not talk.
- Support your arm at heart level on a table or with support from your other arm.

If you feel your blood pressure may have been high during your screening because of nerves or anxiety, ask to have it checked again after a few minutes.

Track Your Numbers

Take charge of your heart health and use these charts to record some important measurements.

Blood Pressure Tracker

Date	Time	Pulse	Systolic/Diastolic	Goal

Notes

Date	Time	Pulse	Systolic/Diastolic	Goal

Notes

Date	Time	Pulse	Systolic/Diastolic	Goal

Notes

Date	Time	Pulse	Systolic/Diastolic	Goal

Notes

Date	Time	Pulse	Systolic/Diastolic	Goal

Notes

Cholesterol Tracker

Date	Time	HDL	LDL	Triglycerides	Total

Notes

Date	Time	HDL	LDL	Triglycerides	Total

Notes

Date	Time	HDL	LDL	Triglycerides	Total

Notes

Date	Time	HDL	LDL	Triglycerides	Total

Notes

Date	Time	HDL	LDL	Triglycerides	Total

Notes

Weight Tracker			Goal
Date	Time	Weight	
Date	Time	Weight	
Date	Time	Weight	
Date	Time	Weight	

A1C Tracker			Goal
Date	Time	Result	
Date	Time	Result	
Date	Time	Result	
Date	Time	Result	

*If you have a continuous glucose monitor, be sure to review your readings with your provider.

Additional Resources

SilverSneakers for Plan Members

If you have a Paramount Elite plan, you have free access to SilverSneakers. This program for people ages 65 and up offers online video workouts, a fitness app, in-person classes in your community and access to more than 15,000 fitness locations across the United States. Visit www.SilverSneakers.com to find out more.

Tobacco Cessation

Want to kick the tobacco habit for good? Call the Ohio Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) for help.

Virtual Therapy

Sondermind is in-network with most Commercial and Medicare Advantage plans. Connect with a therapist or psychiatrist by visiting Sondemind.com or calling 1-866-646-8581 to see if you qualify.

Member Services

Need help finding a PCP or getting an appointment? Call Member Services at 1-833-554-2335. We can also answer questions about all the programs and services available to manage your health.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control, American Heart Association, American Medical Association

The material provided, including websites, links and recommendations is for your information only. It does not take the place your healthcare provider's advice, diagnosis or treatment. You should make decisions about your care with your healthcare provider. What is covered by your plan will be based on your specific benefit plan.

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