



7 Simple Habits That Could Save Your Life



**Gary Burke, DO,
FACC**

For more information about Dr. Burke or another Lourdes expert, call **1-888-LOURDES** (568-7337) or visit the Lourdes Health System website at www.lourdesnet.org and click on “Find a Physician.”

If a little bit is good, more is even better—especially when it comes to healthy habits and heart disease. In fact, the American Heart Association (AHA) has pinpointed seven habits that have been found to contribute to a healthy heart. Follow one or two, and you’re doing your heart some good. Adopt all seven, and you’re doing your heart even better.

The AHA has set a heart health goal for the next 10 years. It wants to improve the heart health of all Americans by 20 percent while reducing deaths from cardiovascular disease and stroke by 20 percent. To reach that goal, the AHA is teaching people about the link between lifestyle habits and heart disease.

Enter the seven heart-healthy habits:

- **Manage blood pressure.** “High blood pressure is the most important risk factor for heart disease,” said Gary Burke, DO, FACC, a cardiologist on staff at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center. The ideal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mm Hg.
- **Get active.** Get moderate exercise 30 minutes a day. This cuts the risk of heart disease because it helps lower blood pressure, boost good cholesterol, control blood sugar and maintain a healthy weight.
- **Control cholesterol.** “Too much ‘bad’ cholesterol in the blood can clog arteries. This raises the risk of heart attack and stroke,” said Dr. Burke. “Get your cholesterol checked. If your total cholesterol is greater than 200 mg/dl, follow your doctor’s advice for lowering it.”
- **Eat better.** Vegetables, fruits, whole-grain products and fat-free or low-fat dairy products pack a strong

nutrient punch without a lot of calories. Include more of these foods, and cut back on highly processed and high-fat foods and salt.

- **Lose weight.** Obesity is a major risk factor for heart disease. Visit www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi to find your body mass index (BMI). If it’s 25 or higher, start losing weight.
- **Reduce blood sugar.** Adults with diabetes are more likely to have heart disease than those without it, said Dr. Burke. Get your blood sugar level checked. If it’s above 100 mg/dl, follow your doctor’s advice.
- **Stop smoking.** Smoking boosts the risk of heart disease. This is especially true if you have other risk factors.

The AHA has set up an online tool called “My Life Check.” Visit mylifecheck.heart.org to see how you stack up against “Life’s Simple 7” and get advice for improving your own heart health.



KEYS TO YOUR HEALTHY HEART

Eating right, exercising, managing stress—they’re all part of living a heart-healthy lifestyle. To learn more about following the AHA’s simple tips, call **1-888-LOURDES** (568-7337) today to receive our FREE “Healthy Heart” brochure.

