

# 7 steps patients should follow to reduce, manage chronic disease

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Preventing and managing chronic disease often requires patients to make healthy lifestyle changes and adjustments to their daily routines. While some might feel overwhelmed by the thought of altering an already busy schedule, it is important to note that lifestyle changes don't have to be major or difficult. There are seven simple lifestyle modifications that any person can implement for chronic disease prevention and to improve their health.

## Manage blood pressure

High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Patients should understand what high blood pressure is and how it can affect the heart and blood vessels. By partnering with their patients to monitor and control high blood pressure, physicians can help patients stay healthier and prevent heart attacks and strokes.

In collaboration with the American Heart Association (AHA), the AMA has created a national consumer campaign to raise awareness of high blood pressure. The campaign aims to inspire those diagnosed with high blood pressure to recognize the importance of prioritizing their condition, continuing the conversation with their health care provider and recommitting to their BP-management plan—before it's too late. Patients can visit [ManageYourBP.org](https://www.manageyourbp.org) to better understand their blood pressure numbers and receive guidance on how to talk with their physicians and care teams about their high BP.

## Control cholesterol

Patients with high cholesterol are at a greater risk for cardiovascular disease. Physicians should talk with their patients about what high cholesterol is, what their levels mean and what they can do to

improve their levels. This can help patients take steps to change their lifestyle and reduce high cholesterol.

## Reduce blood glucose

For patients with high levels of blood glucose, gaining a better understanding of what raises their glucose levels can be helpful. For example, the foods that can increase blood-glucose levels are often not what you think. Identifying and reducing intake of those foods is key to helping patients with abnormal glucose levels take the right steps toward healthier eating.

## Get active

About 80% of American adults and adolescents are insufficiently active. While some patients might struggle to incorporate more daily physical activity, physicians can educate patients on how important activity is for overall well-being and support them to identify ways to be more active.

Physical activity can make people feel, function and sleep better. Healthy adults should get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity, or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity.

## Eat better

One of the best ways to prevent and manage chronic disease is to maintain a healthy diet. For example, making simple dietary changes such as consuming less sodium by reducing the amount of packaged, processed foods in a diet can help patients manage or prevent high blood pressure.

## Lose weight

If a patient has a body mass index in a range that is higher than normal, weight loss can help improve their overall health. Even a weight loss as small as 5–10% can lead to health benefits.

Patients can take steps to lose weight by increasing their physical activity and changing their eating habits. Physicians can help their patients make small and manageable changes to their lifestyle to promote weight loss.

## Stop smoking

Patients who smoke cigarettes are at a higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease. If a patient smokes, quitting is essential to improve their health. Work with your patients to identify options for quitting that include Food and Drug Administration-approved therapies. Electronic cigarettes fall short as a harm-reduction tool and should not be recommended for use to quit smoking.

The AMA has developed online tools and resources created using the latest evidence-based information to support physicians to help manage their patients' high BP. These resources are available to all physicians and health systems as part of Target: BP™, a national initiative co-led by the AMA and AHA.