

Wellness Quick Guide

5 Essential Heart Health Conversations

Created by clinicians. Designed to help you take action.

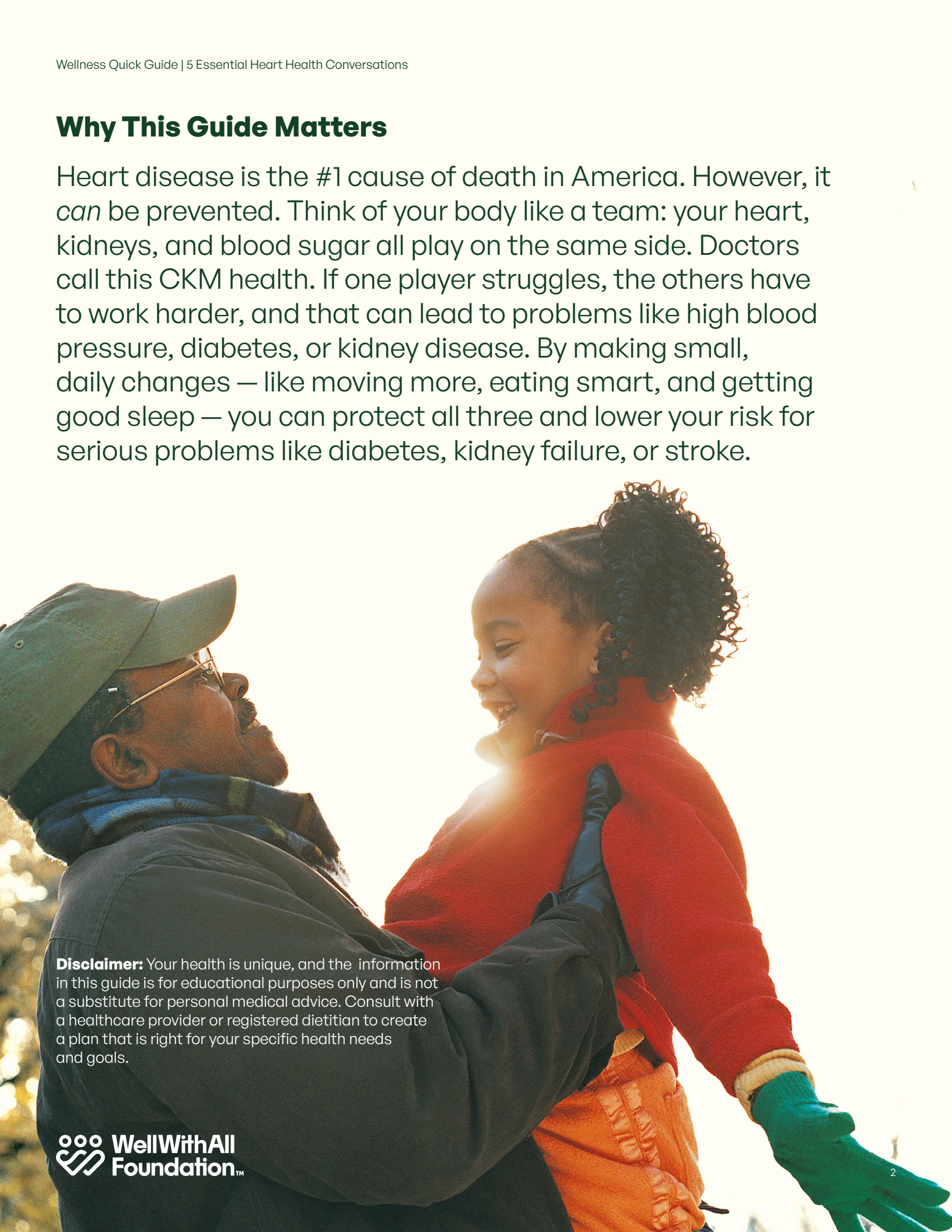


**Grounded in clinical knowledge,
tailored for real people.**

This resource was reviewed by Zachary Hermes, MD, MBA, MPH, JM, Medical Director of Cardiovascular-Kidney-Metabolic Care. His feedback helped ensure this content is both accurate and empowering for real-life use.

Why This Guide Matters

Heart disease is the #1 cause of death in America. However, it *can* be prevented. Think of your body like a team: your heart, kidneys, and blood sugar all play on the same side. Doctors call this CKM health. If one player struggles, the others have to work harder, and that can lead to problems like high blood pressure, diabetes, or kidney disease. By making small, daily changes — like moving more, eating smart, and getting good sleep — you can protect all three and lower your risk for serious problems like diabetes, kidney failure, or stroke.



Disclaimer: Your health is unique, and the information in this guide is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for personal medical advice. Consult with a healthcare provider or registered dietitian to create a plan that is right for your specific health needs and goals.

Start Your Day With Water

One Simple Habit for Energy, Digestion, and Focus



You Good?

If you're feeling backed up, your stomach feels off, or you're dealing with brain fog, headaches, and sugar cravings — it could be your body's way of asking for more water.

Real Talk

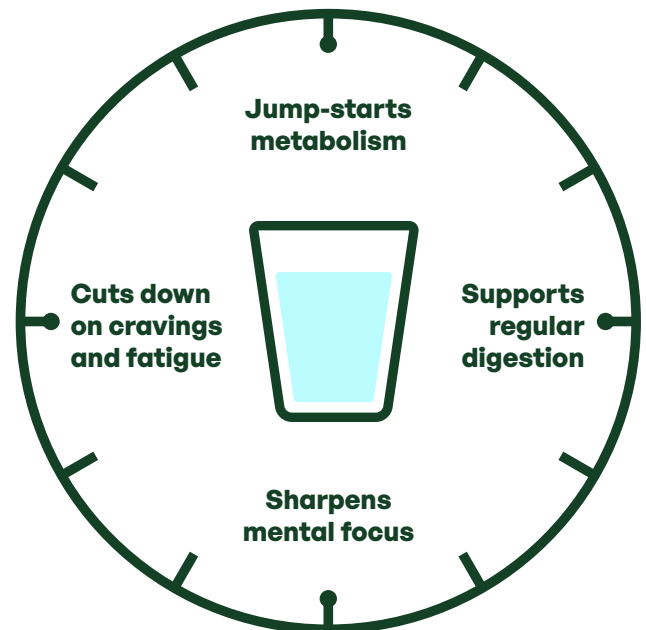


Overnight, your body loses water through breathing and digestion. Most people wake up dehydrated — then reach for coffee instead of water. Without enough hydration, your body struggles. It's not about perfection, but setting the tone for your day.



A Glass of Water First Thing:

You don't have to skip caffeine. Just put water first. It's not about perfection — it's about setting the tone for your day.



Try This: Make Water Your First Power Move of the Day

Pick one strategy, stick with it for 5 days, and notice the difference by mid-morning.



Visual Reminder >

Keep a glass or bottle by your bed, coffee maker or fridge



Flavor Boost >

Add lemon, cucumber, mint, or frozen berries



Habit Pairing >

Drink water right after brushing teeth or before checking your phone



Set a Goal >

Start with 1 cup (8 oz) daily, be consistent and add on from there



You Good?

Ever feel too tired, stressed, or busy to think about your heart? You're not alone. Small choices every day can protect your health and the people you love.



Your Next 5 Moves, and Why They Matter

1. Listen to Your Body → Catch Warning Signs Early

Fatigue, chest pressure, brain fog, these can be early clues your heart needs care.

You Do You, But Better:

Learn how to spot patterns before they become problems — and protect your health sooner.

2. Start Small Where It Matters → Build Habits You Can Stick With

Tired? Focus on sleep. Stressed? Try deep breathing or a 10-minute walk. Out of balance? Start with one healthy meal swap.

You Can Do You, But Better:

Discover how small, doable changes create big results for your energy and long-term heart health.

3. Know Your Numbers → Own Your Power

Certain numbers serve as a dashboard for your body, like blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, weight and waist size.

You Can Do You, But Better:

See why knowing your baseline helps you prevent problems like diabetes, kidney disease, or stroke.

4. Speak Up for Yourself → Get the Care You Deserve

Certain numbers serve as a dashboard for your body. The system hasn't always been fair, especially for underserved communities. Asking questions and advocating for yourself changes outcomes.

You Can Do You, But Better:

Find out how to walk into your next appointment confident, prepared, and heard.

5. Find Your Why → Stay Motivated for What Matters Most to You

Your health fuels the life you want — whether that's chasing dreams, showing up for loved ones, or simply feeling strong and confident in your own skin.

You Can Do You, But Better:

Identify your "why" so every choice you make moves you closer to a longer, fuller life.

Listen to Your Body → Catch Warning Signs Early



You Good?

Ever feel extra tired after simple stuff — like walking up stairs — or notice chest tightness, brain fog, or trouble sleeping? It might not just be stress or getting older. These can be early signals your heart needs attention.

Real Talk



Your body is always talking — the trick is learning to listen. Many people ignore or downplay warning signs until it's too late. Catching them early can make all the difference.

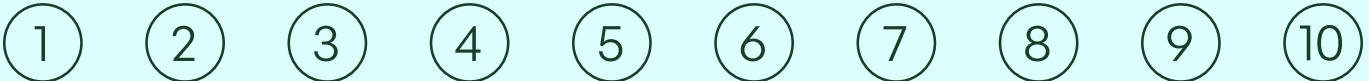
Signals You Shouldn't Ignore

- + Unusual fatigue after normal activities
- + Shortness of breath while resting or sleeping
- + Dizziness, lightheadedness, or frequent headaches
- + Mood changes like irritability, anxiety, or brain fog
- + Trouble sleeping or waking up unrested
- + Chest tightness or pressure (even without pain)

Try This: Pause and check in with yourself

Step 1: Ask yourself:

“On a scale from 1–10, how much is my body trying to tell me something right now?”



Step 2: Check in on your Body, Mood and Behavior

What you've been doing and how you've been showing up. Pick one sign you've been ignoring in each area:

Body

- + Fatigue
- + Chest tightness
- + Shortness of breath

Mood

- + Irritability
- + Anxiety
- + Brain fog

Behavior

- + Skipping meals
- + Avoiding activity
- + Withdrawing from others

Disclaimer: These “signs” are only examples and there could be others beyond this list.

Real-Life Results

When you pay attention to your body's signals, you:

- + Spot problems early before they become serious.
- + Get the care you need faster.
- + Protect your heart and energy for the long run.

Start Small Where It Matters → Build Habits You Can Stick With



You Good?

Ever feel like being “healthy” means changing everything at once, so you don’t even start? Here’s the truth: big results come from small, consistent steps.

Real Talk



You don’t have to overhaul your whole life to protect your heart. The key is starting where it matters most for you – like sleeping better, managing stress, moving your body, or making one food swap. Small habits add up to real change.



Where It Hits Different

Heart health problems often start quietly, but that doesn’t mean those problems are guaranteed to happen. With the right daily habits — like how you eat, move, sleep, and manage stress — you can protect your heart and lower your risk for serious issues like stroke or heart failure.

Try This: Start Where It Matters Most to You

It’s not about doing everything at once — it’s about making meaningful progress where it counts. Figure out what feels most out of balance right now?

Then, ask yourself ›

What feels easiest to do today?

- + I can take a short walk › Start with movement
- + I can add one veggie to each meal › Start with eating habits
- + “I can power down screens 30 minutes before bed” › Start with sleep and recovery.
- + “I can take 5 minutes to breathe, journal, or stretch” › Start with stress management.
- + “I can write down one thing I’m grateful for today” › Start with emotional well-being and purpose.

Eat (nutrition + hydration)

Do: Choose whole foods, add veggies, drink water.

Why it Matters: Fuels your body, lowers blood pressure, protects arteries.

Move (physical activity + strength)

Do: Aim for 10 minutes of brisk movement, stretch, or strength.

Why it Matters: Strengthens your heart muscle, improves circulation, boosts energy.

Sleep (rest + recovery)

Do: Get 7+ hours, turn off screen 30-minutes before before bed.

Why it Matters: Rest resets your heart, lowers stress hormones, improves mood.

Manage Stress (reduce toxins + regulate emotions)

Do: Try deep breathing, journaling, or stepping outside.

Why it Matters: Keeps blood pressure steady, reduces strain on your heart, clears your mind.

Next Step: Pick 1–2 areas, write them down, and keep them visible — your phone lock screen, a note on your mirror, or a reminder on your fridge.

Real-Life Results

When you start small and stick with it, you:

- + Build momentum instead of burnout.
- + Feel more energy and less stress in your day.
- + Create lasting habits that protect your heart long term.

Know Your Numbers → Own Your Power



You Good?

Ever feel “fine” but still wonder if something’s going on under the surface? High blood pressure, cholesterol, or blood sugar don’t always cause symptoms — until it’s too late.

Real Talk



Your numbers are like your body’s dashboard — they warn you before things break down. Knowing your blood pressure, blood sugar (A1C), cholesterol, and weight/waist size gives you the power to take control instead of being caught off guard.



The 4 Numbers That Matter Most*

Blood Pressure:

High pressure strains your heart and raises stroke risk.

› **Goal: under 130/80.**

Cholesterol (LDL):

High LDL (bad cholesterol) can clog arteries.

› **Goal: under 100.**

Blood Sugar (A1C):

High sugar damages nerves, vessels, and organs.

› **Goal: under 5.7%.**

Weight/Waist Size:

Too much around the waist = higher risk for heart + metabolic disease.

Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or local clinic to help check your latest numbers. Jot them down to keep a record in your phone or a notebook. You can download free apps like MyChart, Apple Health, or Google Fit to stay on track and share with your healthcare provider.

Signs Your Numbers May Be Off

If you’re seeing these signs, it’s time to get tested.

- + Frequent thirst or urination
- + Blurry vision or numbness
- + Headaches, chest pressure, or nosebleeds
- + Fatigue or shortness of breath

Real-Life Results

When you know and track your numbers, you:

- + Catch silent problems before they become serious.
- + Lower your risk for diabetes, kidney disease, heart attack, or stroke.
- + Feel empowered and in control of your health journey.

***Disclaimer:** The goal numbers outlined here are based on general targets from the American Heart Association and the American Diabetes Association. Your individual goals may vary depending on your age, health history, and risk factors. Always talk with your healthcare provider to understand your specific target numbers.

Speak Up for Yourself → Get the Care You Deserve



You Good?

Ever left a doctor's visit feeling rushed, confused, or like your concerns weren't taken seriously? You're not alone — and it doesn't have to be that way.

Real Talk



Let's be real: the healthcare system hasn't always treated everyone equally. Underserved communities have historically faced shorter appointments, fewer referrals, bias in pain management, and less access to specialists.



How to Speak Up

Speaking up for yourself (and the people you love) isn't just helpful — it's essential. You should go into your appointments with a list of your top health concerns (maybe it's one or two issues), any unusual symptoms and at least one question for your healthcare provider. Speaking up for yourself, asking questions and pushing back when something doesn't feel right is how you make sure your health doesn't fall through the cracks.

Say This, Not That

Not sure what to say? Start here to get clearer answers and better care. And remember these two quick moves:

- + **Know your rights:** You're entitled to your records, a second opinion, and care explained in terms you understand.
- + **Bring backup:** A friend, family member, or advocate can help you feel supported and heard.

	"Okay, whatever you think."		"Can you walk me through my options?"
	"I'll just Google it later."		"Can you explain that in plain language?"
	"I'll wait and see if it gets worse."		"What happens if we wait — and what happens if we treat it now?"
	"Sorry for asking so many questions."		"I want to make sure I understand before I decide."

Real-Life Results

When you speak up and own your power, you:

- + Walk out with answers you understand.
- + Get the tests, referrals, or treatments you actually need.
- + Feel respected, seen, and in control of your health.

Find Your Why → Stay Motivated for What Matters Most to You



You Good?

Ever start strong with a health goal, then lose steam? It happens to everyone. The key is knowing your why — the reason that keeps you going when motivation dips.

Real Talk



Your health fuels the life you want. Maybe that's having the energy to keep up with friends, feeling confident in your own skin, being there for your family, or breaking a cycle of illness in your community. Whatever your "why" is, it's personal, powerful and protects what matters most — from your own life goals to the people who count on you.



Find Your "Why" and Fuel Your Future

Try This: Take 10 minutes to reflect on your deeper motivation — and what it means in practice.

Dream It:

Picture your future. What do you want more of — energy, freedom, confidence, joy?

Name It:

Put it into words. "I want to be around for my kids." "I want fewer medications." "I want to feel good in my body." "I want to feel strong enough to chase my dreams"

Live It

Make one choice today that honors your "why." Maybe it's a walk, a meal swap, a stress break, or booking that check-up. Tell a loved one about your "why." Invite them to support you — or join you — in your health journey.

Real-Life Results

When you know your why and fuel your future, you:

- + Stay motivated because your goals actually mean something to you.
- + Turn everyday choices into steps toward your bigger vision.
- + Protect your health today so you can enjoy the future you imagine.