

How Old Is Your Heart?

Take this quick quiz to gauge your heart-disease risk—and find out how to lower your odds.

BY GINA ROBERTS-GREY

Just as spending too much time in the sun can make your skin look older, poor habits—such as eating too much junk food and not exercising—can actually cause your heart to age faster than the rest of your body. And that increases your chance of cardiovascular disease. The good news: You can slow—or even reverse—the aging process in your ticker. To find out your heart's age, take this simple quiz. Then, use the result as a jumping-off point to discuss with your doctor how you can better your health.

ULTIMATE GOAL:
A heart age that's 5 to 10 years younger than your chronological age.



1 Take note of nutrition labels for a day (or look up the information at calorieking.com). How many grams of fiber did you eat?

- A** At least 30 g
- B** About 20 g
- C** Fiber...what's that?

2 When it comes to smoking, you:

- A** Are a nonsmoker and live in a smoke-free home
- B** Don't light up yourself but live with someone who smokes
- C** Smoke, whether occasionally or regularly

3 How many minutes of physical activity do you rack up?

- A** 30 minutes or more at least three times a week
- B** Less than 30 minutes, a couple of days a week
- C** I don't exercise

4 Which of the following describes how your doctor might assess your weight?

- A** Your weight is healthy
- B** You're overweight
- C** You're obese or have a BMI of 30 or higher

Change your number

Regardless of how many years you've actually lived, an "old" heart is often identified by plaque buildup that restricts blood flow or hardens arteries. If you reduce the plaque, you can take as much as a decade off your heart's age. To do so, aim to eat 30 g of fiber daily (good sources are vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds, berries, apples and citrus fruits), exercise regularly, maintain a healthy weight and avoid cigarettes.

CALCULATE YOUR HEART AGE

1. **START** with your current age
2. **SUBTRACT 3** years for every **A** answer
3. **ADD 2** years for every **B** answer
4. **ADD 5** years for every **C** answer

SOURCE: Steven Masley, MD, fellow, American Heart Association, and author, *The 30-Day Heart Tune-Up*