

WVU Medicine highlights heart health reset to help prevent and slow heart disease

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MORGANTOWN, W.Va. — Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States, and West Virginia continues to experience higher-than-average rates, with more than 14 percent of residents diagnosed with some form of cardiovascular disease.

While the statistics are concerning, [WVU Medicine](#) cardiologists say heart disease is often preventable, and in some cases reversible, through lifestyle changes, early detection, and advances in treatment.

[Lakshmi Muthukumar, M.D.](#), a cardiologist at the [WVU Heart and Vascular Institute](#), emphasized a proactive approach she describes as a “heart health reset,” focused on improving everyday habits that directly affect cardiovascular health.

“A heart health reset basically means switching to a healthy way of living,” Dr. Muthukumar said.

Muthukumar advises her patients to eat the right foods, maintain an ideal body weight, exercise regularly, and make sure their blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol are within normal limits.

This approach aligns with the American Heart Association’s Life’s Essential 8, which emphasizes healthy nutrition, regular physical activity, smoking cessation, adequate sleep, stress management, and control of key health metrics. Together, these factors play a critical role in preventing heart disease and reducing the risk of heart attacks, strokes, and heart failure.

Diet is a cornerstone of cardiovascular health. Emphasis is placed on whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, and plant-based foods, while limiting processed foods, excess sodium, saturated fats, and added sugars. Portion control and reading nutrition labels are also important, as even nutritious foods can contribute to weight gain and metabolic issues when consumed in excess.

Regular physical activity is another essential component. Experts recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week, though starting with shorter periods of movement can still provide meaningful benefits. Incorporating walking, stretching, or light activity into daily routines can help reduce sedentary behavior and support heart health over time.

Medical management may also be necessary for some patients. Newer medications, including GLP-1 receptor agonists, have demonstrated benefits for weight loss and blood sugar control, with growing



Lakshmi Muthukumar, M.D.

evidence that they may also reduce heart inflammation and improve outcomes in patients with diabetes, heart failure, or established heart disease.

For individuals who feel overwhelmed or believe it may be too late to make changes, Muthukumar encourages starting small and seeking support.

“It’s never too late,” Muthukumar said. “Even small, consistent steps can slow the progression of heart disease and in some cases, help reverse early changes.”

Advancements in cardiovascular care have further improved outcomes for patients. Minimally invasive procedures, robotic-assisted surgeries, and newer medications have reduced recovery times and enhanced quality of life for people living with heart disease.

The WVU Heart and Vascular Institute provides comprehensive cardiovascular care, offering preventive cardiology, [advanced diagnostics](#), [minimally invasive treatments](#), [rehabilitation services](#), and [long-term disease management](#). This integrated approach allows patients to receive expert care before, during, and after a cardiac event — close to home.

In the latest episode of the Live Healthy West Virginia podcast, “Heart Health Reset: Preventing & Reversing Heart Disease,” Muthukumar discussed practical steps individuals can take to improve cardiovascular health at any age. The podcast is available on WVU Medicine’s [YouTube channel](#) and [Spotify](#).

To learn more about heart health services at WVU Medicine, visit WVUMedicine.org/Heart.

About Live Healthy WV

Live Healthy WV, a podcast presented by WVU Medicine, aims to help everyone live a better, healthier life in West Virginia and beyond. Listen to this episode and past episodes on WVU Medicine’s YouTube channel or Spotify.