

Are You at Risk for Heart Disease?

There are certain risk factors for heart disease that you can't control, such as age, family history and race or ethnicity. But there are other risks you can reduce or eliminate through healthier living and/or medication. If you can check any boxes below, talk to your doctor so he or she can evaluate your risk for heart disease and determine what steps you should take to prevent it.

Age

For men, the risk of heart disease goes up after age 55; for women, the risk rises sharply after menopause.

Activity Level

If you don't get an average of 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous exercise, it's time to get moving. Research shows that approximately 30 minutes per day, five days a week is the amount needed to prevent heart attacks and strokes.

Blood Sugar

A fasting blood sugar level over 126, or an A1c of 6.5% or higher, puts you at risk.

Family History

You have a father or brother who was diagnosed with heart disease when he was 55 or younger, or a mother or sister who was diagnosed with heart disease when she was 65 or younger.

High Blood Pressure

Nearly half of American adults have high blood pressure. Ideal blood pressure is 120/80. If yours is higher, talk with your doctor about ways to lower it.

High LDL and Low HDL Cholesterol

There are two types of cholesterol: LDL, which is bad, and HDL, which is good. Too much LDL, or not enough HDL, increases the risk cholesterol will build up inside the arteries, causing them to narrow and stiffen. If a blood clot forms and blocks a narrowed artery, a heart attack or stroke can result.

Race or Ethnicity

You are Asian American, Hawaiian, Native American, Mexican American or African American.

Smoking

Studies show that people who work with a smoking-cessation counselor are 10 times more likely to quit than those who try on their own. Call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** to be connected to your state's tobacco quitline.

Stress Level

If you're often anxious, nervous or stressed, try stress-management techniques and ask for support from family, friends and your doctor.

Unhealthy Diet

Most of what you put on your plate should be foods that come from the ground in their whole, unprocessed form. This includes fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans and whole grains. Try to limit how much refined flours, saturated fats, sugar and excess salt you eat.

Waist Measurement

Should be under 35 inches for women and under 40 inches for men.

Sources: webmd.com/heart-disease/risk-factors-heart-disease#1; heart.org

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EC005349A (0120)