



Walk Your Heart to Health

Health Tips

Heart Disease Risk Factors



Heart disease occurs when the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle become hardened and narrowed because of a buildup of plaque on the arteries' inner walls. Plaque is the accumulation of fat, cholesterol, and other substances. As plaque builds up in the arteries, blood flow to the heart is reduced.

Heart disease can lead to a heart attack. A heart attack happens when a cholesterol-rich plaque bursts and releases its content into the bloodstream. This causes a blood clot to form over the plaque, totally blocking blood flow through the artery. A heart attack can cause permanent damage to the heart muscle and increase your risk for another heart attack in the future.

Heart Disease Risk Factors

Those you cannot control:

- Age (45 years or older for men and 55 years or older for women)
- People in your family having early heart disease (before age 45 in men or before age 55 in women)

Risk Factors you can control

RISK FACTORS	FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW	STEPS TO PREVENT HEART DISEASE
High blood pressure High blood pressure is called the silent killer.	When your blood pressure is high, your heart works harder than it should to move blood to all parts of the body. If not treated, high blood pressure can lead to stroke (brain attack), heart attack, eye and kidney problems, and death. Check your readings: Less than 120/80 mm Hg is best. High blood pressure is 140/90 mm Hg or more (based on readings at two different visits).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check your blood pressure once a year. Check it more often if you have high blood pressure. ▪ Aim for a healthy weight. ▪ Be active every day. ▪ Use less salt and sodium. ▪ Eat more fruits, vegetables, and lowfat dairy products. ▪ Cut back on alcohol.
High blood cholesterol Cholesterol in your arteries is like rust in a pipe. When there is too much cholesterol in the blood, the arteries become clogged, which leads to heart disease.	Total cholesterol: Desirable: less than 200 mg/dL Borderline-high: 200-239 mg/dL High: 240 mg/dL or more If you are age 20 or older, have your blood cholesterol checked every 5 years, or more often if it is high. If it is high, ask your doctor how you can lower it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Get your blood cholesterol level checked. ▪ Learn what your number means. ▪ Eat fewer foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol. ▪ Eat more fruits, vegetables, and grains. ▪ Stay physically active. ▪ Aim for a healthy weight.
Smoking You put your health and your family's health at risk when you smoke.	Cigarette smoking is addictive. It harms your heart and lungs. It can raise your blood pressure and blood cholesterol and those of others around the smoker.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stop smoking now or cut back gradually. ▪ If you can't quit the first time, keep trying. ▪ If you don't smoke, don't start.
Overweight Overweight occurs when extra fat is stored in your body.	Being overweight increases your risk of developing high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and diabetes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep a healthy weight. Try not to gain extra weight. ▪ If you are overweight, try to lose weight slowly. Lose 1/2 to 1 pound a week.
Diabetes When the sugar in the blood is high, your body cannot use the food you eat for energy.	Diabetes is serious; you may not know you have it. It can lead to heart attacks, blindness, amputations, and kidney disease.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Find out if you have diabetes. ▪ Get your blood sugar level checked.
Physical inactivity Physical inactivity can double your chances of heart disease and take away years from your life.	Physical inactivity increases your risk of high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and diabetes. Children and adults should do 30 minutes or more daily of physical activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You can build up to 30 minutes each day by being active 10 minutes three times a day. ▪ Try walking, dancing, and playing soccer. ▪ Use the stairs instead of the elevator.