

Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors:

Risk factors are traits or habits that increase a person's chances of having cardiovascular disease. Some risk factors can be changed. These risk factors are high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and cigarette smoking. Other modifiable factors are diabetes, being overweight/obese, having a sedentary lifestyle, and poor stress management techniques.

Age, sex, and family history are risk factors that cannot be controlled. As a person ages, it is more likely for the heart and blood vessels to be damaged. Men are more likely to have cardiovascular disease at an earlier age than women. Women do not usually have cardiovascular disease from atherosclerosis until after menopause due to the protective effect of natural hormones, typically estrogen. As risk factors increase, so does the risk of developing cardiovascular disease.



High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

Blood pressure is defined as the amount of force/pressure on the artery wall when your heart pumps and relaxes with each heartbeat.

Normal blood pressure is less than 120 systolic (top number) and less than 80 diastolic (bottom number). Borderline high blood pressure is when the pressure is between 120 - 139 systolic **or** a diastolic pressure of 80 - 89. A blood pressure of 140/90 or higher for any length of time is considered high blood pressure (hypertension). A single elevated blood pressure is not diagnostic of hypertension.

Blood pressure naturally rises with age. African Americans are more likely to have high blood pressure than Caucasians. Overweight people are more likely to have high blood pressure than thin people. Narrow blood vessels can cause the heart to work harder and increase the blood pressure.

Things you can do to Control High Blood Pressure:

- Take prescribed medicines.
- Lose weight.
- Reduce sodium in your diet. Increase fruits and vegetables.
- Stop smoking.
- Get regular exercise.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

High Blood Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fatty wax-like substance found in the blood. Some cholesterol is needed for good health.

Cholesterol is a substance carried in the blood in fat and protein called lipoproteins. There are two types of lipoproteins. High-density lipoproteins (HDL), good cholesterol, because they carry extra fat away from the arteries. Low-density lipoproteins (LDL), bad cholesterol, because they cause fat to build up on the artery wall.

Normal total cholesterol for adults is below 200. The risk of heart attack increases as the level of total cholesterol rises. A high LDL or a low HDL cholesterol level puts you at an increased risk of heart disease.

Things you can do to Control High Blood Cholesterol Levels:

- Have your cholesterol checked once a year.
- Lower your total fat intake to less than 30% of total calories.
- Reduce saturated fat in your diet to less than 10% of total calories.
- Increase dietary fiber intake.
- Keep your cholesterol intake to less than 300 mg a day.
- Control your weight and exercise.

Smoking

People who smoke have twice the risk of early death from heart attack. Nicotine narrows the blood vessels. Carbon monoxide from inhaling competes with oxygen in red blood cells causing less oxygen to be carried to the heart. Smoking increases the risk of heart disease by damaging artery walls and by allowing more cholesterol to deposit on the wall. Smoking reduces the blood HDL level. Smoking can cause blood to thicken and form clots more easily. Second hand smoke exposure can have the same effects.

Tips on How to Stop Smoking:

- Admit the problem of your habit to yourself, set realistic stop goals.
- Stop smoking one day at a time, this is a hard habit to break.
- Use alternate activities to replace smoking (walking, chew gum, drink water).
- Ask a friend to quit with you, have a support system in place.
- Identify what triggers make you smoke and attempt to avoid them.

**If you would like more information on stopping smoking, call:
NYS Smokers Quit Line at 1-866-NY-QUITS**

Diabetes

Diabetes results in high blood sugar levels (glucose). Diabetes occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin and/or the body cannot use insulin produced properly. Diabetes can increase the amount of lipoproteins in the blood and increase fatty deposits in the arteries. Diabetes is often accompanied by high blood pressure and obesity.

Thing you can do to Control Diabetes:

- Check your glucose levels at home and try to keep them as close to normal as possible. The Hgb A1C goal is to be <7.
- Follow diet as prescribed.
- Take medicines as prescribed.
- Control your weight.
- Exercise regularly.

Obesity (Overweight)

People that are 10 to 20% above their ideal weight have increased risk for heart disease. Obesity increases blood cholesterol, triglyceride levels, blood pressure and risk for diabetes. It can also decrease HDL levels. Extra weight makes your heart work harder. A good initial goal is to lose 5-10% of current body weight.

To Control Obesity:

- Reduce your total calories.
- Start an exercise program.
- Discuss weight loss measures with your doctor

Sedentary/Inactive Life-Style

Inactive people run a higher risk of having coronary artery disease than people who exercise regularly. The many benefits of exercise include: strengthening heart muscle, toning other body muscles, aids in weight loss, enhances your mood, lowers total blood cholesterol while raising good cholesterol, lowers blood pressure and heart rate.

Suggestions for Exercise:

- Follow the exercise plan given to you by your doctor, physical therapist, or cardiac rehabilitation team (if applicable).
- Gradually increase your activity, go slow to avoid injury.
- Exercise when you are rested. Avoid exercising if you don't feel well.
- Select an enjoyable aerobic exercise and do it at least 3 times a week for 30-45 minutes. Be sure to also incorporate resistance training at least 2 days a week. It is okay to exercise in small amounts to reach your daily goal of 30-45 minutes 5-7 days a week.

Stress Management

Stress is a normal part of life. It causes the release of adrenalin which speeds up your heart rate, narrows your blood vessels and increases your blood pressure. It is not the stressful situation, but how you react to stress that is important. People who experience frequent stress are more prone to cardiovascular disease.

Tips to Reduce Stress:

- Identify events in your life that create stress and avoid those that increase stress.
- Learn stress management techniques
- When you cannot avoid stressful situations, attempt to respond in a way that is not stressful for you.
- Exercise regularly.

Identify your personal risk factors and things you want to do to modify them:

My personal risk factors:

- High Blood Pressure
- High Blood Cholesterol
- Smoking
- Diabetes Mellitus
- Overweight
- Sedentary Life-Style
- Stress And Tension

Actions I can take to modify my risk factors:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 1.
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- 1.
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