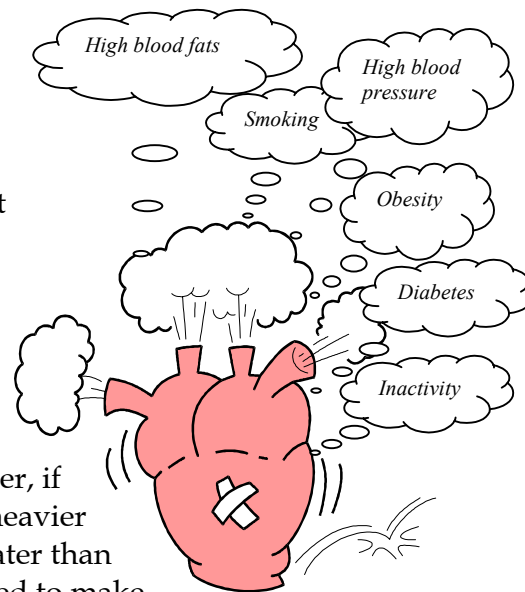


Controlling Risk Factors for Heart Disease

There are some factors that increase your risk for heart disease over which you have no control. Being male, a woman after menopause, an African-American, and getting older, or having a family history of heart disease are risk factors you cannot change. However, you do have control over the most common factors that increase your risk for heart disease - obesity, high blood fats or blood pressure, smoking and physical inactivity.



Obesity or Overweight

Being obese or overweight makes your heart work harder and makes you more likely to have high blood pressure, diabetes and high blood fats. Avoid weight gain, especially as you get older, if you are already at a desirable weight. If you are more than 20% heavier than your desirable weight, or are a woman with a waist size greater than 35 inches, or man with a waist size greater than 40 inches, you need to make some lifestyle changes to improve your weight. Try to increase activity and spend less time sitting or watching television. Try to consume fewer calories. Focus more on grains, vegetables, fruits, low-fat dairy, lean meat or protein and fewer added fats and high sugar foods. Losses as small as 10 to 20 pounds can improve blood pressure, blood sugar control and blood fats.

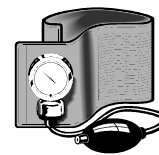
High Blood Fats

High blood levels of total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol) and triglycerides, plus low blood levels of HDL cholesterol (good cholesterol) all contribute to heart disease. You can keep your blood fats at desirable levels by reducing dietary saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol, maintaining a healthy (desirable) weight and being physically active. It is important to know your levels of these blood fats; have them checked every 5 years after age twenty. Your doctor will check blood fats more often if you have high levels or many risk factors for heart disease.

Blood Fats	Desirable levels	Desirable levels if have heart disease or diabetes
Total cholesterol	less than 200 mg/dL	less than 200 mg/dL
LDL cholesterol	less than 130 mg/dL	less than 100 mg/dL
HDL cholesterol	greater than 40 mg/dL	greater than 45 mg/dL (men) or 55 mg/dL (women)
Triglycerides	less than 150 mg/dL	less than 150 mg/dL

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure can damage your arteries, causing them to narrow and the heart work harder to make blood flow. You are more likely to have a stroke or heart attack. Blood pressure can be controlled by reducing salt intake, losing weight, getting regular exercise and eating a healthy diet that includes plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and low-fat dairy foods. You have high blood pressure if either the top or bottom number, or both numbers are higher than desirable. Persons with diabetes have to keep blood pressure slightly lower to reduce risks. Have your blood pressure checked regularly and take your medication if prescribed by your doctor.



Blood Pressure Category	Blood Pressure readings (mm Hg)
Healthiest	120/80 or lower
Normal for most people	130/85 or lower
Desirable for diabetes	130/80 or lower
High blood pressure	greater than 140/90

Diabetes

You are at higher risk for developing heart disease and having a heart attack if you have diabetes. It is very important to control your diabetes to protect your heart. Follow your eating plan, get exercise, lose weight if necessary, check your blood glucose levels and take your medication or insulin if prescribed.

Smoking



You are more likely to die suddenly with heart disease if you smoke. Smoking can raise blood pressure, cause arteries to narrow and make blood more likely to clot and cause a heart attack. The best strategy is to never start. If you smoke, you need to quit. Some people are more successful at quitting if they seek help from a stop-smoking program and/or try nicotine patches or nicotine gum. Ask your doctor or other health care provider for information to help you quit.

Inactivity

Most Americans get little exercise these days and thus are missing out on probably the easiest and least expensive way to help prevent heart disease. Even a moderate level of activity, such as leisure walking, can be helpful if done regularly and consistently. More vigorous activities, such as brisk walking, running, aerobics, dancing, cycling, or other active sports provide even more benefit. Aim to be active at least 30 minutes most days of the week, if not every day, for a fit heart. Start slowly if you are not currently active and check with your doctor before starting an exercise program if you have not been active for a long time, are over 55, and/or currently have any health problems.



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