



# Heart Disease Risk Factors You Can Do Something About

Risk Factors	Facts You Need to Know	Take These Steps to Prevent Heart Disease
<p><b>High blood pressure</b></p> <p>High blood pressure (hypertension) is called the silent killer.</p>	<p>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, heart attack, eye and kidney problems and death.</p> <p><b>Check your number:</b>            Normal is less than 120/80 mmHg            Prehypertension is 120-139/90-89 mmHg            High blood pressure is 140/90 mmHg or more            (based on readings at two different visits)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have your doctor check your blood pressure.</li> <li>• Aim for a healthy weight.</li> <li>• Become physically active.</li> <li>• Follow a healthy eating plan, including food lower in salt and sodium.</li> <li>• Limit alcoholic beverages.</li> <li>• Take medication, if prescribed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>High blood cholesterol</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p><b>Total cholesterol:</b>            Desirable is less than 200 mg/dL            Borderline-high is 200-239 mg/dL            High is 240 mg/dL or more</p> <p>If you are age 20 or older, have your blood cholesterol checked by a blood test called a “lipoprotein profile” every 5 years, or more often if it is high. If it is high, ask your doctor how to lower it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get your blood cholesterol level checked.</li> <li>• Learn what your numbers mean.</li> <li>• Follow a low saturated fat and low cholesterol eating plan.</li> <li>• Become physically active.</li> <li>• Aim for a healthy weight.</li> <li>• Take medication, if prescribed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Smoking</b></p> <p>You put your health and your family’s health at risk when you smoke.</p>	<p>Cigarette smoking is addictive. It harms your heart and lungs and can greatly increase your risk of a heart attack.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop smoking now or cut back gradually.</li> <li>• If you can’t quit the first time, keep trying.</li> <li>• If you don’t smoke, don’t start.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Overweight</b></p> <p>Overweight occurs when extra fat is stored in your body.</p>	<p>Excess weight increases your risk of a heart attack and of developing high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and diabetes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a healthy weight. Try not to gain extra weight.</li> <li>• If you are overweight, try to lose weight slowly. Lose ½ to 2 pounds a week.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Diabetes</b></p> <p>When the sugar in the blood is high, your body cannot use the food you eat for energy.</p>	<p>Diabetes is serious; you may have it and not know you have it. It can lead to heart attacks, blindness, amputations and kidney disease.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out if you have diabetes or prediabetes. Get your blood sugar level checked.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physical activity</b></p> <p>Living a sedentary lifestyle can increase chances of heart disease and take away years from your life.</p>	<p>Physical inactivity increases your risk of high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and diabetes. Adults should 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become active; get 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week.</li> </ul>

**Source:** *The Heart Truth for Women Speakers Guide*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), Revised October 2010

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