

Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors

| Risk Factors | How it affects the heart | Prevention Plan |
|--|---|--|
| High Blood Pressure Today's Blood Pressure Reading: ____ / ____ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blood pressure is the amount of force on the artery wall when your heart pumps and relaxes with each heart beat. Normal Blood Pressure is 120/80 Narrowed blood vessels increase the pressure causing the heart to work harder | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take prescribed medications Lose weight Reduce sodium in your diet Stop Smoking Get regular exercise Limit alcohol intake |
| High Blood Cholesterol | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cholesterol is a fatty wax-like substance found in the blood It is carried in the blood in packages fat and protein called lipoproteins. High Density Lipoproteins (HDL) are good because they carry extra fat away from the arteries. Low-density lipoproteins (LDL) are bad because they cause fat to build up on the artery wall A high LDL or a low HDL level increase heart disease risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You should have your cholesterol checked once per 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 Keep your cholesterol intake to less than 300mg a day Control your weight |
| Smoking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicotine narrows the blood vessels causing an increase in blood pressure and heart rate. Carbon monoxide competes with oxygen in the red blood cells so there is less oxygen carried to the heart. Smoking increases the risk of heart disease by damaging the artery wall and by allowing more cholesterol to deposit on the wall Smoking reduces the blood HDL level. Blood also becomes thicker and forms clots more easily. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop smoking one day at a time Plan other activities to stop smoking (walking, chewing gum) Ask a friend to help you quit (or to quit with you) Determine what cause or triggers make you smoke |
| Diabetes Mellitus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diabetes occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin or the body cannot use insulin properly. With diabetes there is an abnormal amount of lipoprotein which speeds up atherosclerosis and raises the risk of heart attack | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check your glucose levels; try to keep them close to normal Diet and medication Control your weight Exercise regularly |
| Heredity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heredity becomes a factor if you have blood relatives who have coronary artery disease before the age of 60. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You cannot control heredity but you can help prevent heart disease by reducing risk factors. |
| Overweight | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obesity increases blood cholesterol, triglyceride levels, blood pressure and the risk for diabetes It also decreases HDL cholesterol levels Extra weight makes your heart work harder to supply the body with the needed oxygen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce your total calories Start an exercise program Work closely with your dietitian or doctor to reduce calories and begin to exercise |
| Sedentary Life-Style | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inactive people run a greater risk of having coronary artery disease than people who exercise regularly Benefits of Exercise include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthens the heart muscle Tones muscles Aids in weight reduction Lowers your total blood cholesterol Lowers your blood pressure and resting pulse rate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the exercise program given to you by your doctor or trainer Gradually increase your activity Exercise when you are rested Exercise at least 3 times per week for 30 minutes |
| Stress and Tension | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress causes the release of adrenaline, which speeds up your heart rate, narrows your blood vessels and increases your blood pressure so your heart has to work harder. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify events in your life that create stress Learn stress management techniques Exercise regularly |

Some risk factors cannot be changed (age, sex, family history), while all other risk factors are controllable. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chance for heart disease. If you already have heart disease or have several risk factors, you may be eligible to join the **Century Health Study, which compares 2 strategies for treating heart disease. Refer to our website at [www. CenturyHealthStudy.org](http://www.CenturyHealthStudy.org), email: ms.century@uth.tmc.edu or call **713-500-5200** for more information about enrolling.