

# THE EHS CONNECTION

February 2017



## The Basics of Heart Disease

You can take steps today to lower your risk of heart disease and heart attack. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States.

To help prevent heart disease, you can:

- Eat healthy and get active.
- Watch your weight.
- Quit smoking and stay away from secondhand smoke.
- Control your cholesterol and blood pressure.
- If you drink alcohol, drink only in moderation.
- Take steps to prevent type 2 diabetes.
- Manage stress.

### Am I at risk for heart disease?

You are at higher risk for heart disease if:

- You are a woman over age 55
- You are a man over age 45
- Your father or brother had heart disease before age 55
- Your mother or sister had heart disease before age 65

As you get older, your risk of heart disease and heart attacks increases. But the good news is that heart disease can be prevented.

### What is heart disease?

When people talk about heart disease, they are usually talking about coronary heart disease (CHD). It's also called coronary artery disease (CAD). This is the most common type of heart disease.

When someone has CHD, the coronary arteries (tubes) that take blood to the heart are narrow or blocked. This happens when cholesterol and fatty material, called plaque build up inside the arteries.

### Plaque is caused by:

- Fat and cholesterol in the blood
- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- Too much sugar in the blood (usually because of diabetes)

When plaque blocks an artery, it's hard for blood to flow to the heart. A blocked artery can cause chest pain or a heart attack.

### What is a heart attack?

A heart attack happens when blood flow to the heart is suddenly blocked. Part of the heart may die if the person doesn't get help quickly.

Common signs of a heart attack include:

- Chest pain (or a feeling like pressure, squeezing, or fullness)
- Pain or discomfort in the upper body, like the arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach above the belly button
- Trouble breathing (while resting or being active)
- Feeling sick to your stomach or throwing up
- Feeling dizzy, light-headed, or unusually tired
- Breaking out in a cold sweat

Not everyone who has a heart attack will have all the signs.

### Don't ignore changes in how you feel!

Signs of a heart attack often come on suddenly. But sometimes, they develop slowly - hours, days, or even weeks before a heart attack happens.

Talk to your doctor if you feel tired for several days, or if other health problems (like pain or trouble breathing) bother you more than usual.

### Call 911 right away if you or someone else might be having a heart attack.

Don't ignore any signs or feel embarrassed to call for help. Acting fast can save a life. Call 911 even if you are not sure it's a heart attack.

An ambulance is the best and safest way to get to the hospital. In an ambulance, EMTs (emergency medical technicians) can check how you are doing and start life-saving medicines and other treatments right away.

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# STRESS...THE BASICS

Not all stress is bad. Stress can help protect you in a dangerous situation. But preventing and managing chronic (ongoing) stress can help lower your risk for serious health problems like heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, and depression.

You can prevent or reduce stress by:

- Planning ahead
- Deciding which tasks need to be done first
- Preparing for stressful events

**Some stress is hard to avoid. You can find ways to manage stress by:**

- Noticing when you feel stressed
- Taking time to relax
- Getting active and eating healthy
- Talking to friends and family

**What are the signs of stress?**

When people are under stress, they may feel:

- Worried
- Angry
- Irritable
- Depressed
- Unable to focus

**Stress also affects the body. Physical signs of stress include:**

- Headaches
- Back pain
- Problems sleeping
- Upset stomach
- Weight gain or loss
- Tense muscles
- Frequent or more serious colds

Stress is different for everyone.

**What causes stress?**

Stress is often caused by some type of change. Even positive changes, like winning a contest or getting a job promotion, can be stressful. Stress can be short-term or long-term.

**Common causes of short-term stress:**

- Too much to do and not enough time
- Lots of little problems in the same day, like a traffic jam or running late
- Getting lost
- Having an argument

**Common causes of longer-term stress:**

- Death of a loved one
- Chronic (ongoing) illness
- Caring for someone with a serious illness
- Problems at work or at home
- Money problems

Over time, stress can lead to health problems.

**What are the benefits of managing stress?**

Managing stress can help you:

- Sleep better
- Control your weight
- Get sick less often and feel better faster when you are sick
- Lessen neck and back pain
- Be in a better mood
- Get along better with family and friends

## TAKE ACTION!

Being prepared and in control of your situation will help you feel less stress. Follow these 9 tips for preventing and managing stress.

### 1. Plan your time.

Think ahead about how you are going to use your time. Write a to-do list and figure out what's most important - do those things first. Be realistic about how long each task will take.

### 2. Prepare yourself.

Prepare ahead of time for stressful events like a job interview or a hard conversation with a loved one.

- Picture the event in your mind.

- Stay positive.

- Imagine what the room will look like and what you will say.

- Have a back-up plan.

### 3. Relax with deep breathing or meditation.

### 4. Relax your muscles.

Stress causes tension in your muscles. Try stretching or taking a hot shower to help you relax.

### 5. Get active.

Physical activity can help prevent and manage stress. It can also help relax your muscles and improve your mood.

- Aim for 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of physical activity. Try going for a bike ride or taking a walk.

- Be sure to exercise for at least 10 minutes at a time.

- Do strengthening activities - like sit-ups or lifting weights - at least 2 days a week.

### 6. Eat healthy.

Give your body plenty of energy by eating vegetables, fruits, and protein.

### 7. Drink alcohol only in moderation.

Avoid using alcohol and drugs to manage your stress. If you choose to drink, drink only in moderation.

### 8. Talk to friends and family.

Tell your friends and family if you are feeling stressed. They may be able to help.

### 9. Get help if you need it.

Stress is a normal part of life. But if your stress doesn't go away or keeps getting worse, you may need help. Over time, stress can lead to serious problems like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or anxiety.

If you are feeling down or hopeless, talk to a doctor about depression.

If you are feeling anxious, find out how to get help for anxiety. A mental health professional (like a psychologist or social worker) can help treat these conditions with talk therapy (called psychotherapy) or medicines.

**Lots of people need help dealing with stress - it's nothing to be ashamed of!**

# RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE

## Sedentary lifestyle

Thinking about skipping the gym again? Keep in mind that living an inactive life is a major heart disease risk factor.

About 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week could greatly reduce your risk, but any activity is better than none.

## Excess weight

People who have excess body fat—especially around the midsection—are more likely to develop heart disease or have a stroke even if they have no other risk factors.

## Diabetes

If you have type 2 diabetes your risk of heart disease goes up—a lot—although controlling blood sugar will help.

## Be stingy with salt

To keep your blood pressure under control, and therefore lower your risk of heart disease, limit yourself to about half a teaspoon of salt a day, the AHA advises. Even though many foods naturally contain salt, up to 75% of the salt in the typical American diet comes from processed foods—everything from soups to salad dressings. The ADA recommends choosing foods without added salt, and preparing home-cooked meals with little or no salt

## Eat fruits, veggies, and low-fat dairy products

One of the easiest ways to stay heart healthy is to simply eat more of the foods you've always known are good for you. This includes choosing nonfat or low-fat dairy products over whole-milk products and eating a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables.

## HEART ATTACK SIGNS IN WOMEN

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back.
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.
- As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is [chest pain](#) or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

**If you have any of these signs, don't wait more than five minutes before calling for help. Call 9-1-1 and get to a hospital right away.**



# What are my risks for getting heart disease?

Ask yourself these 3 questions:

## 1 How many risk factors do I have?

### Major risk factors

are those that research has shown significantly increase the risk of heart disease. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chance of developing it.

- ❑ age
- ❑ gender
- ❑ family history
- ❑ high blood cholesterol
- ❑ high blood pressure
- ❑ physical inactivity
- ❑ obesity and overweight
- ❑ smoking
- ❑ diabetes

### Non-Modifiable

These risk factors cannot be changed.

### Modifiable

Any person can make changes to these risk factors, even modest improvements to your health will make a big difference.

## 2 Do I know Life's Simple 7® keys to prevention?

### CONTROL CHOLESTEROL

98.9 million Americans age 20 and older have total blood cholesterol levels of 200 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) or higher.

### MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE

Approximately 90% of all Americans will develop hypertension over their lifetime and 1 in 3 adults has high blood pressure, yet, many people don't even know they have it.

### REDUCE BLOOD SUGAR

Heart disease and stroke are the No. 1 causes of death and disability among people with type 2 diabetes.

### STOP SMOKING

Among Americans age 18 and older, more than 19 million women and 24 million men are smokers.

### EAT RIGHT

When you eat a heart-healthy diet you improve your chances for feeling good and staying healthy – for life!

### LOSE WEIGHT

More than 2/3 of our American adult population is overweight, with 1/3 of us in the obese category.

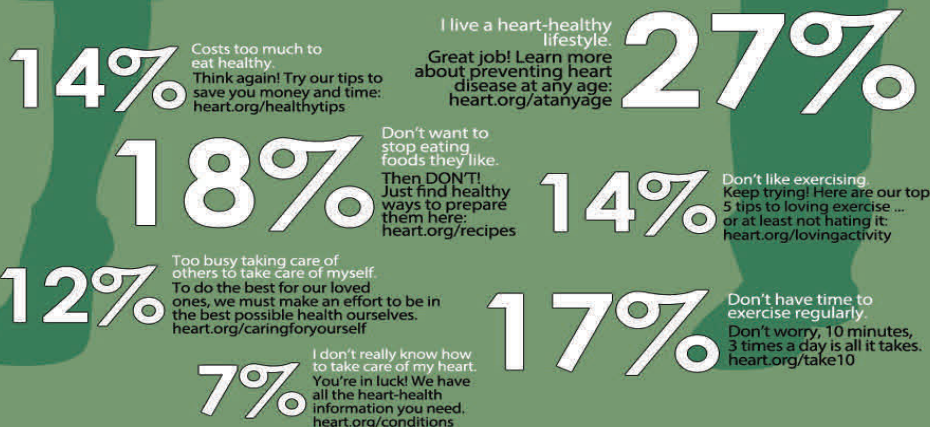
### GET MOVING

Over 50% of Americans do not get the recommended at least 150 minutes a week of moderate to vigorous physical activity.

Get your **My Life Check Assessment** now at [heart.org/mylifecheck](http://heart.org/mylifecheck)

## 3 Am I making an effort or making excuses?

Top "barriers" to healthy living from a recent survey of website visitors to heart.org:



# February Word Search

For a chance to win a great prize, complete the Word Search and send it via e-mail to [lisa.drake@oswego.edu](mailto:lisa.drake@oswego.edu) OR through Campus Mail: Lisa Drake, 110 Lee Hall. Make sure to put your name on it! The winner for January was Kris Bailey. Look for: Heart Disease, Heart Attack, Secondhand Smoke, Diabetes, Stress, Risk, Coronary, Cholesterol, Plaque, Artery, Chest Pain, High Blood Pressure, Sedentary, and Diabetic.

G	U	I	L	P	J	K	E	R	W	S	D	Q	R	K	S	I	R
T	E	L	U	T	K	Y	R	A	N	O	R	O	C	W	T	L	M
B	K	R	P	U	L	L	Q	L	L	S	F	A	H	S	P	S	P
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P	E	M	O	B	H	W	W	N	N	P	W	B	L	E	M	I	G
S	S	T	F	C	N	D	Q	M	A	P	U	I	K	W	N	E	H



**Calvin Says:** Exercise is important your dog's heart too!  
Taking your dog for a nice long walk is good for both of you.  
If you don't have a dog, borrow one or adopt from a shelter!

Dutchism for February:  
Criticism  
It's so easy to find fault  
To tear down, to bring to a halt.  
True art is building the good,  
By doing what we should.  
Negative gives in to positive.  
The world a better place to live.

**Ergonomic Assessments** FYI: Christine Body has been doing ergonomic assessments since 1996 and is available to do them here on campus. She can be reached at 312-2770 and would be happy to assist you with any questions or issues.