

What Black Americans Need to Know About Heart Disease



CLOSE THE GAP

Heart disease. Are you at risk?





**Increase your knowledge.
Take care of yourself
and your heart health.
Others could be
depending on you.**

Heart disease is the #1 killer in the United States.¹
Any one of us could be at risk without knowing it.

Did you know?

More than 40% of black adults living in the United States have high blood pressure.¹

- For black Americans, high blood pressure tends to be more common and more severe—this is a major reason why black Americans die at an earlier age.¹

Your gender, age, or race can add to your chance of developing heart disease.

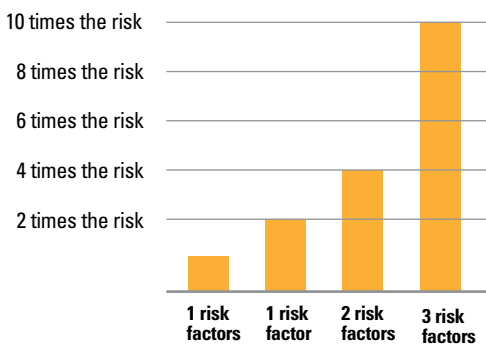
- Black Americans are more likely to have heart failure and suffer severely from it.²
- More women than men die of heart disease, although more men have heart attacks.¹
- As you age, your risk for heart disease increases.¹
- Heart disease causes more deaths in Americans of both genders and all racial and ethnic groups than any other disease.³
- Nearly half of all black women living in the U.S. have some form of heart disease.³

How can you tell if you are at risk?

Many different risk factors (conditions or lifestyle habits) can affect your chance of developing heart disease.⁴ It's important to understand which risk factors affect you and what actions you can take to lower your risk of developing heart disease.

Check the designated boxes to the right if you answer "yes" to any of the risk factor questions.

Multiplier Effect: Risk factors for heart disease^{4,5}



For each risk factor you checked "yes" to, your overall risk of developing heart disease skyrockets.⁴ The risk factors don't add their potential danger like one plus one equals two—they multiply it.

For instance, if you have three risk factors you are 10 times more likely to develop heart disease than a person with no risk factors.

For the risk factors you can control, it's important you take action to minimize your risks. If you have some in the "can't control" category, then it's even more important that you take action on the risks you can control to help reduce your overall risk for heart disease.

Risk factors you CAN'T control:^{1,6}

- Increasing age**
 - For men: are you over age 45?
 - For women: are you post-menopausal or over age 55?
- Heredity (including race)**
 - Does anyone in your immediate family have a history of heart disease or diabetes?
 - Are you black American or Latino American?

Risk factors you CAN control:^{1,6}

- Do you have **diabetes**?
- Do you **smoke**?
- High blood pressure**
 - Is your blood pressure 140/90 mmHg or higher? (normal is below 120/80 mmHg)
- High cholesterol**
 - Is your total cholesterol over 200?
- Obesity**
 - Are you 30 pounds or more over your recommended weight?
 - For men: is your waist measurement greater than 40 inches?
 - For women: is your waist measurement greater than 35 inches?
- Inactivity**
 - Do you exercise fewer than three times a week?

Terms you need to know.



Heart disease is an umbrella term for a number of different diseases that affect the heart.⁷

Blood pressure is the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your arteries. A blood pressure reading below 120/80 mmHg is considered normal.^{1,6}

High blood pressure (also known as hypertension) is a blood pressure reading of 140/90 mmHg or higher. High blood pressure is dangerous because it makes your heart work too hard, putting you at serious risk for heart disease and stroke.^{1,6}

Every 37 seconds, an American dies of heart disease.¹

Sudden cardiac arrest is when the heart suddenly and abruptly stops beating. Sudden cardiac arrest is not the same as a heart attack. Sudden cardiac arrest occurs when electrical problems in the heart cause a dangerously fast heart rate.⁸

A **heart attack** is different. It results from damage to the heart muscle caused by blood flow blockage, rather than an electrical problem.⁸

Heart failure does not mean the heart suddenly stops working. "Failure" means that the heart is not able to pump enough blood and oxygen to meet your body's needs.⁸

Being honest about your risk factors will get you the most realistic assessment and help your doctor develop a plan to lower your overall risk.



Visit your doctor regularly.

Nothing replaces a discussion with your doctor or health care provider.

Talk to your doctor about your risk factors—choose two to three questions most relevant to you and write down the answers.

Here are some questions you can ask your doctor:

- Do I have heart disease?
- What tests should I have, and how often, to monitor my risk factors for developing heart disease and stroke?
- What do my test results mean?
- Are my blood pressure numbers within a normal range?
- Are my cholesterol numbers within a normal range?
- What sort of plan do you recommend for me to lower my risk?
- Can you help me plan a safe weight loss and exercise program?
- What are the possible side effects of the medications I've been prescribed?

To learn more about your personal risk for developing heart disease, you can search the Internet for information to discuss with your doctor.

Sites to consider include:

The American Heart Association
americanheart.org

The Association of Black Cardiologists:
abcardio.org

The Heart Truth Campaign for Women
hearttruth.gov

LifeBeat Online
lifebeatonline.com

Medline Plus
nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/heartdiseases.html

The Office of Minority Health
omh.gov

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
nhlbi.gov

WomenHeart
womenheart.org

WebMD
webmd.com

Take charge of your heart health.
Here are some tips to get you started.



Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.⁹

People who smoke are up to six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than non-smokers. If you smoke, QUIT!

Aim for a healthy weight.⁹

If you don't know your ideal weight, ask your doctor. The more overweight you are—the higher your risk for heart disease.

Get moving.⁹

Make a commitment to be more physically active. Every day, aim for 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity such as taking a brisk walk, raking, dancing, light weight lifting, house cleaning, or gardening.



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Eat for heart health.⁹

Choose a diet low in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and cholesterol. Be sure to include whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.

Know your numbers.⁹

Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure, cholesterol (total, HDL, LDL, triglycerides), and blood glucose. Work with your doctor to improve any numbers that are not normal.

Please note: This information is not a substitute for medical care. As always, you should consult your doctor or health care provider.

SOURCES:

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- 7 Heart.Com. What is Heart Disease? Available at: <http://www.heart.com/heart-disease.html>. Accessed May 20, 2009.
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