



10 Things You Never Knew about Heart Disease

- 1. Laughter is therapeutic.** Doctors from the University of Maryland School of Medicine found that watching a funny movie for even 15 minutes can increase your blood flow. Remember to laugh every day—it can keep your heart happy and healthy.
- 2. Heart disease is the leading cause of death of American women.** A recent survey found that fewer than one in five physicians knew that more women than men die each year from the disease. Be your own health advocate. Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure and blood cholesterol level.
- 3. Chest pain isn't the only warning sign of a heart attack.** Symptoms for most heart attacks include mild chest pain, some shoulder discomfort, or shortness of breath. Other signs can be nausea, lightheadedness, or breaking out in a cold sweat. If you experience these symptoms, call 911. It could save your life.
- 4. Know your numbers.** If you're over 20, you should know your blood cholesterol number. If it's high, there are treatments (including medication and exercises) that can help. You should also get your blood pressure and your blood sugar levels checked regularly.
- 5. Less is more.** Researchers found that people tend to eat everything on their plate. Since maintaining a healthy weight is important for heart health, watch those calories! Measure out your servings and use smaller plates for automatic portion control.
- 6. Restaurant portions are getting larger—and so are we.** The average pasta portion 20 years ago was two cups. Today your plate is loaded with twice as much. Have an appetizer as your meal, share an entree, or ask the waiter to wrap up half of the meal to go.
- 7. Diabetes, a major risk factor for heart disease, is affected by what you eat.** Research has shown that eating more fruits, vegetables, and fiber can actually change the blood's sensitivity to insulin within as little as two weeks. So listen to what your mother told you and eat your veggies!



- 8. Walking can save your life.** A recent study found that a sedentary 40-year-old woman who begins walking briskly half an hour a day, four days a week, can enjoy almost the same low risk of heart attack as a woman who has exercised regularly her entire life. Start walking! Your heart will love you for it.
- 9. Even children can suffer from hypertension.** About five out of every 100 children have higher than normal blood pressure. Make sure to get your children's blood pressure checked when they visit their doctor.
- 10. Childhood obesity is becoming an epidemic.** The percentage of overweight children has increased substantially in the past two decades. Get your family off the couch and reduce the amount of time spent in front of computer and TV screens. Walking, biking, or playing active games are great ways to spend some quality time together.



Heart Disease: Know the Risks

What is heart disease?

Coronary heart disease occurs when the arteries become narrowed and hardened due to a buildup of plaque. Over time heart disease can lead to heart failure, where the heart muscle is so weak that it cannot pump enough blood. When the blood supply to the heart is severely reduced or completely cut off, a heart attack occurs.

Are you at risk?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. Some people are more likely to develop heart disease than others. Some factors cannot be controlled, such as family history or advancing age. However, since most risk factors *can* be controlled, it's important to know what you can do to *take one step* for better health.

High blood pressure

Blood pressure is the force of your blood against the arteries when your heart beats and then rests. If you have high blood pressure, you are at risk for developing heart disease.

High cholesterol

Cholesterol is a type of fat that your body needs, but if there is too much, it can build up and narrow the arteries. There is “bad” cholesterol (LDL) and “good” cholesterol (HDL). Your total cholesterol should be less than 200.

Diabetes

Increased blood sugar caused by diabetes can damage blood vessels and nerves, putting you at greater risk for heart disease. You can have diabetes without knowing it, so get your blood sugar checked regularly.

Smoking

Smoking cigarettes not only causes lung cancer, it also promotes clogged arteries, raises blood pressure, and reduces oxygen in the blood. Smoking is more than a bad habit—it's downright deadly.



Overweight or obese

Extra body weight means that there is more fat in the blood and around the organs. This can lead to heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Losing weight reduces your risk.

Unhealthy food choices

Eating foods high in saturated fats and cholesterol can lead to clogged arteries. Foods that are high in salt can increase high blood pressure. Packaged, prepared, and fast foods tend to have high levels of salt, cholesterol, saturated and trans fats.

Lack of exercise

Too little physical activity can lead to obesity, high blood pressure, low levels of HDL (good) cholesterol, and diabetes. Exercise helps you maintain a healthy weight, reduce stress, and improve your overall health.

Special Risks

Heart disease affects everyone, but certain groups are at greater risk than others.

- More women die of heart disease than of breast cancer and ovarian cancer combined.
- The lifetime risk of developing high blood pressure for women aged 55 is about 90 percent.
- African American women ages 55–64 are twice as likely as white women to have a heart attack and 35 percent more likely to suffer from coronary artery disease.
- African Americans are more likely to have high blood pressure, develop it earlier in life, and have more severe cases.
- Due in part to higher rates of diabetes and obesity, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and native Hawaiians are at high risk for heart disease.
- One in five American children is obese and one in three is considered to be overweight, putting them at a higher risk for diabetes and high blood pressure than ever before.

For More Information

Log on to www.pbs.org/takeonestep/heart for advice, tips, and resources about heart disease.



Take One Step to a Healthy Heart

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. It kills more than 700,000 people each year—more deaths than from all forms of cancer combined. It affects both men and women of all racial and ethnic groups.

But take heart! The good news is that there are many things you can do to greatly reduce your risk of heart disease. Taking just one of the following steps will start you on the journey to better health.

Get Moving

Regular physical activity helps you maintain a healthy weight, reduces stress, and improves your overall health. Lack of activity can lead to obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

Take one step to increase your physical activity: Just 30 minutes a day makes a difference. Go for a walk, take the stairs instead of the elevator, ride a bike, or play ball with your kids.

Quit Smoking

Smokers are twice as likely to die from a heart attack than non-smokers. If you quit right now, your body can repair the much of the damage from cigarettes within a year.

Take one step to quit smoking: Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about trying a nicotine gum, patch, or lozenge to reduce cravings. There are also medications that can help. Then try quitting with a friend, family member, or smoking cessation group.

Lose Weight

Extra body weight can contribute to high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Even moderate weight loss can improve your health.

Take one step to lose weight: Eat fewer fast and processed foods, reduce your soda intake, and use smaller portions.

Eat Smart

Eating foods that are high in salt, sugar, and fat can contribute to high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and obesity.

Take one step to eat smart: Foods that are high in fiber, like whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables, have been proven to help lower the amount of LDL (bad) cholesterol in the blood.



Know Your Numbers

You may have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or high blood sugar and not know it. These “silent” symptoms can lead to heart disease and heart attack.

Take one step to know your numbers: Go to your health clinic, HMO, doctor, or pharmacy to get your levels checked. Controlling these numbers can significantly decrease your risk of heart disease.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Log on to <http://www.pbs.org/takeonestep/heart> to find out more, as well as these organizations:

AARP

www.aarp.org

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice, and control. AARP produces several publications and has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. A Campaign Affiliate of *Take One Step: A PBS Health Campaign*.

Alliance for a Healthier Generation

<http://www.healthiergeneration.org>

This site contains useful information about childhood obesity and what parents, kids, and schools can do about it.

American Heart Association

<http://www.americanheart.org>

This comprehensive site offers information, advice, recipes, and resources on all aspects of heart disease and heart-healthy lifestyles, in English and Spanish.

America on the Move

<http://www.americaonthemove.org>

AOM works with partners and sponsors to educate and empower people to improve their health and quality of life, with free programs, tools, and resources. A Resource Partner of *Take One Step: A PBS Health Campaign*.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/index.htm>

This site provides a range of facts, tips, screening tools for patients and the public, with materials in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Filipino.

Reader's Digest Magazine

<http://www.rd.com>

Reader's Digest is the largest-circulation magazine in the world, published in 21 languages and 50 editions worldwide. The Web site contains information and advice for a variety of health conditions, including *10 Easy Steps to a Healthier Heart*. A Promotion Partner of *Take One Step: A PBS Health Campaign*.

WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease

<http://womenheart.org>

This site includes fact sheets, recipes, exercises, and information about heart disease prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Materials are available in English and Spanish. An Outreach Partner of *Take One Step: A PBS Health Campaign*.

YMCA of the USA

<http://www.ymca.net>

YMCA Activate America™ is a national initiative that is rallying YMCAs across the country to help children and adults discover and sustain healthier ways to live. A Community Partner of *Take One Step: A PBS Health Campaign*.



Heart Attack: Know the Signs

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. It kills more than 700,000 people each year and affects millions more. And women are six times more likely to die from heart attacks than breast cancer.

You can have heart disease for years without pain or any other obvious symptoms. In fact, many people don't know they have heart disease until they have a heart attack.

If you think that you or someone else is having a heart attack, call 911 right away. The longer time without treatment, the greater the damage to the heart and risk of death.

Signs and Symptoms

Shortness of breath. It can be hard to catch your breath or to take a deep, full breath, usually experienced after exercise or other strenuous activity.

Repeated episodes of chest discomfort. It can feel like pain, uncomfortable pressure, or squeezing that lasts for several minutes at a time.

Discomfort in other parts of the upper body, such as one or both arms (usually the left), the back, left shoulder, neck, jaw, or stomach

Numbness or tingling in the arm, hand, or jaw

Dizziness or light-headedness

Sweating

Especially for Women

Women are less likely to feel chest pain during a heart attack than men. In fact, studies suggest that women often experience other heart attack symptoms, including:

Back, neck, or jaw pain

Persistent heartburn or indigestion

Nausea or vomiting

Dizziness or lightheadedness

Weakness

Fatigue



Pre-Heart Attack Symptoms

Some people experience heart attack symptoms 4–6 months to 1 week before the attack. If you have these symptoms, consult with your doctor.

Shortness of breath

Sleep disturbance

Unusual fatigue

Chest pain

Indigestion

Anxiety

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