

Control Your Risk for Heart Disease

Choose
HEALTH!



The number one cause of death for both men and women in the United States is still cardiovascular disease. In fact, about 1 in every 5 deaths is caused by the problem. You can help reduce your chances for heart disease by learning your risk factors and choosing to practice healthy habits. These positive moves can also cut your risk for the next two leading causes of death, cancer and stroke, and other chronic illnesses as well.

Risk factors for heart disease that cannot be changed:

- Increasing age -as we get older our risk for heart disease goes up.
- Gender - men have more of a chance for heart disease and get it earlier. The risk increases for men over 45 and women over 55. After menopause that changes. Not only does the threat for women then match men's, women are also more likely than men to die from their heart attack.
- Family history - having a father or brother who had heart disease before the age of 55, or a mother or sister who had heart disease before the age of 65 puts you at greater odds.

Risk factors for heart disease that can be changed:

- Smoking or exposure to second-hand smoke
- Diabetes
- Obesity and over-weight
- Inactivity
- High Cholesterol
- High Blood Pressure

So what is a person to do? First, do not dwell on the things you cannot change. Recognize they apply to you, but choose to focus on the things you can do something about. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chance for developing illness, so even controlling one risk can make a difference. You will also learn that healthy habits interact with each other. Exercise can help lower your weight thus helping with blood pressure, blood cholesterol and diabetes control as well. Awesome! There are no guarantees in life, but the best advice is to protect your heart now. Flip the page for some suggestions to get you started!



- **Stop Smoking**-Choose to quit now. Ask your healthcare provider for support. Choose to make your home and car smoke-free, too.
- **Control your weight**-Choose to eat smaller portions of food and beverages. Select foods low in fat. Eat more fruits and vegetables instead of high fat snacks and desserts. Drink water instead of soda.
- **Get moving**-Decide to be more active in your daily routine. Start by walking 5 minutes a day. The recommended suggestion is for 30 minutes of moderate exercise on 5 or more days per week. It is O.K. to split that time up in smaller sessions of 10 minutes or more. If you are over 45 or have heart disease, talk with your doctor before starting an exercise program.
- **Control Cholesterol**-Choose to know your cholesterol level by getting a blood test. If it is high, talk to your doctor about treatment choices. Cutting back on fried foods and animal fats helps.
- **Control High Blood Pressure**-Choose to know your blood pressure reading. If it is high, talk with your doctor about treatment choices. Limiting your intake of salt and salty foods helps.
- **Control Diabetes**-Find out if you are at risk for diabetes. Get your blood sugar checked. If you are diabetic, work hard with your healthcare provider to keep your blood sugar in normal limits.
- **Manage stress**-Laugh everyday. Learn to use deep breathing as a stress reliever. Forgive and forget.
- **Moderate Alcohol Use**-If you must drink, limit your alcohol to 2 drinks per day. If you are built small or are a woman, you should limit your drinking to 1 per day.

**Please ask your healthcare provider about your risk for heart disease and chronic illness. If you would like more information about a heart healthy life, please call OSF Saint Francis RiverPlex @ (309) 282-1624 or visit our web site at:
www.osfsaintfrancis.org**

Choose wisely, *Choose* HEALTH!

To talk with an OSF Saint Francis registered, licensed dietitian, call 655-3705 (hospital), 282-1600 (RiverPlex) or 655-7936 (Penn. Ave. office)

References: 1) www.medlineplus.gov/coronarydisease 12/03
2) American Heart Association, Risk Factors and Coronary Heart Disease.
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