

BIG 6 Heartbreakers: Take them to Heart

What's your risk for heart attack? Ask the average American to name the risk for factors for heart disease and most will answer, high cholesterol. Cholesterol gets a lot of attention, but it's not the only culprit. There are several factors that contribute to coronary artery disease (CAD), which can put you at risk for heart attack or stroke. Take them to heart! Review the BIG 6 factors.

Do you smoke?

Do you have high cholesterol: greater than 200 or Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL), "bad cholesterol", level greater than 160.

Is your blood pressure greater than 135/85.

Are you physically inactive: exercising less than 30 minutes of moderate exercise or physical activity 3 days a week.

Do you have type II diabetes?

Do you weigh more than 20% above your ideal body weight?

If you answered yes to 2 or more factors above, you may be at high risk for developing coronary artery disease. While you can't do anything about risk factors such as age and heredity, the good news is you have control over the 6 risk factors listed above. Take the time and play "RISKO" to identify your risk factors to reduce your risk for heart attack or stroke.

Mark off the items you answer in order to complete "RISKO" (up, down, across, or diagonally).

R	I	S	K	O
OVER 45 YEARS OF AGE	BLOOD PRESSURE IS 135/85 OR HIGHER	CHOLESTEROL LEVEL IS GREATER THAN 200	TRIGLYCERIDES OR GREATER THAN 160	20 POUNDS OR MORE OVERWEIGHT
HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER WHO HAD A HEART ATTACK	HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT YOUR BLOOD	HDL (GOOD) CHOLESTEROL	DON'T KNOW YOUR TRIGLYCERIDE	GET LESS THAN A TOTAL OF 30

BEFORE AGE 55 (FATHER OR BROTHER) OR BEFORE AGE 65 (MOTHER OR SISTER)	PRESSURE IS TOO HIGH	LEVEL IS LESS THAN 29	LEVEL	MINUTES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY 3 DAYS A WEEK
HAVE PASSED MENOPAUSE OR HAD YOUR OVARIES REMOVED	DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE IS	FREE SPACE FOR LIFE	SMOKE CHEW DIP TOBACCO PRODUCTS	HAVE DIABETES OR NEED MEDICINE TO CONTROL YOUR BLOOD SUGAR
ARE AFRICAN AMERICAN PUERTO RICAN CUBAN MEXICAN AMERICAN	HAVE CAROTID ARTERY DISEASE OR HAVE HAD A STROKE	DON'T KNOW YOUR TOTAL CHOLESTEROL	CONSUME MORE THAN 1½ OZ OF 80 PROOF WHISKEY 1 OZ OF 100 PROOF WHISKEY 5 OZ OF WINE OR 12 OZ BEER ON A DAILY BASIS	YOU HAVE A CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE, OR YOU HAVE HAD A HEART ATTACK
OVEREAT CONSUME TOO MUCH SODIUM OR ALCOHOL	HAVE AN ABNORMAL HEARTBEAT	LDL (BAD) CHOLESTEROL IS GREATER THAN 130	BLOOD SUGAR LEVEL GREATER THAN 120	YOU LIVE OR WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO SMOKE

If you marked any boxes, you have identified potential risk factors for heart disease and/or stroke. Contact the HAWC at 327-8480 to attend a HEALTHY HEART class or consult your medical provider.

Once you know your risk factors for CAD, it's up to you to make some positive changes in your lifestyle. Quit smoking. Nicotine increases heart rate and blood pressure, adding significant stress to your heart and blood vessels. Quitting smoking can reduce CAD risk by 50% to 70% within 5 years of quitting.

Lower your cholesterol. High cholesterol promotes the buildup of plaque on artery walls, reducing blood flow. Diet and exercise are the best lifestyle remedies, along with medication, if prescribed. Get up and move. Give your heart at least 30 minutes of accumulated moderate exercise 5-6 days per week or get 30 minutes of aerobic exercise 3-4 days per week.

Reduce your blood pressure. According to the American Heart Association, at least 25% of Americans have hypertension. If your BP is often elevated, take measures such as losing weight, smoking cessation, exercising and lowering your salt intake. Take your medication, if prescribed, and monitor your blood pressure regularly.

Lose excess weight. Being overweight contributes to CAD: high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes. If you are more than 20% over your ideal weight, ask your health care provider to help design a diet and exercise plan for losing the weight.

Learn to manage your stress. When you are stressed, your body reacts by raising your blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and produces certain hormones that can lead to arterial wall damage.

Be dedicated to your heart and put your heart on a diet. Eat less saturated fat. Cut total fat intake. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. Reduce sodium intake. Eat enough fiber. Watch the alcohol. Some of the most deadly factors for heart disease are correctable. By controlling the Big 6, you can significantly lessen the odds that you'll have a heart attack. The HAWC offers a variety of Heart Healthy classes.

For more information call 327-8480.