

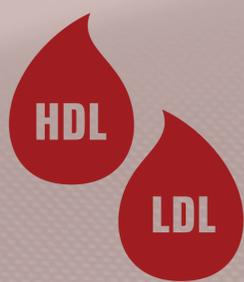
# ARE YOU AT RISK FOR HEART DISEASE?

There are several risk factors for developing heart disease. Some of the risk factors can be **modified** through lifestyle changes and medical care, **while other risk factors cannot be changed**. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chances of developing heart disease.

## MODIFIABLE heart disease risk factors

### RISK FACTORS

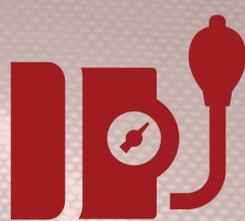
### MODIFICATION OF RISK



#### HIGH CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is a form of fat that is necessary for your body to function. Too much cholesterol circulating in your blood can clog your arteries and put you at risk for a stroke or heart attack. While there is “good cholesterol” (high density lipoprotein or HDL), and “bad cholesterol” (low density lipoprotein or LDL), your total cholesterol should be below 200 mg/dL.<sup>1</sup>

**Sticking to a healthy diet that’s low in saturated fat and exercising regularly can help keep your cholesterol levels in check.**



#### HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Also called hypertension, having high blood pressure puts stress on your arteries and can put you at risk for a heart attack, stroke, aneurysm or heart failure. The aim is to maintain healthy blood pressure readings of no higher than 120/80.<sup>2</sup>

**High blood pressure can be reduced through adopting a healthy, low-salt diet; maintaining a healthy weight; not smoking and decreasing stress. Your doctor may prescribe medication to reduce your blood pressure.**



#### DIABETES

Having diabetes makes you two to four times more likely to have heart disease or a stroke than an adult without diabetes.<sup>3</sup>

**Eating a healthy diet, getting proper exercise and maintaining a healthy weight can help keep your diabetes in check. Be sure to regularly test your blood sugar and take any prescribed medications.**



#### SMOKING

Smoking greatly increases your risk for coronary artery disease, peripheral artery disease, heart attack, heart failure and stroke, as well as cancer and chronic lung disease.

**Quit. By quitting smoking, you can cut your risk of stroke or heart disease in half in just one year.<sup>4</sup>**



#### OBESITY

Obesity puts an added strain on your heart and increases your blood pressure while the additional fat and cholesterol in your blood can increase your risk for coronary artery disease, peripheral artery disease, heart attack, heart failure and stroke.

**Diet and exercise are the important first steps to maintaining a healthy weight. Try to keep your body mass index (BMI) at less than 25 and your waist circumference less than 35 inches.<sup>5</sup>**



#### STRESS

Stress causes your body to release hormones that can increase your blood pressure and can also trigger unhealthy responses such as overeating, smoking or drinking too much alcohol, all of which are bad for your heart.

**Finding healthy ways to reduce your stress can improve your heart health. Being active, meditating, taking up a hobby, spending time with friends and family, or even playing with a beloved pet can be helpful ways to reduce stress.**

## Risk factors that **CANNOT** be modified

Unfortunately, not all of the risk factors for heart disease can be modified. These include:

- **Age:** People over the age of 55 are more likely to develop heart disease.
- **Family history of heart disease:** If your family has a history of heart disease, your risk for developing heart disease may be elevated.
- **Ethnicity:** African-Americans and Hispanics have a higher risk than Caucasians for developing heart disease.

### Sources

[1] National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/resources/heart/heart-cholesterol-hbc-what.html>

[2] U.S. National Library of Medicine: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000163.htm>

[3] The American Heart Association: [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Diabetes/WhyDiabetesMatters/Cardiovascular-Disease-Diabetes\\_UCM\\_313865\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Diabetes/WhyDiabetesMatters/Cardiovascular-Disease-Diabetes_UCM_313865_Article.jsp)

[4] American Heart Association's Go Red for Women: <https://www.goredforwomen.org/know-your-risk/factors-that-increase-your-risk-for-heart-disease/smoking-heart-disease/>

[5] Scripps.org: <http://www.scripps.org/articles/4173-health-risks-of-obesity>