



Risk Factors for Heart Disease

There are numerous conditions and lifestyle habits that can increase your chance of developing heart disease. We call these conditions and lifestyle habits, **risk factors**, and while you may be able to control some factors, others are simply out of your control. That's why **understanding the factors** that can increase your risk of developing heart disease is so important. **Knowledge is power** so that you can take the necessary steps to help reduce the possibility of developing heart disease.

Risk Factors You CAN NOT Control



HEREDITY (INCLUDING RACE)

Having a family history of heart disease increases your risk, and so can race. Black and Hispanic Americans have higher rates of heart disease risk factors such as hypertension, obesity and diabetes.¹ Furthermore, black men and women are at greater risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke than white men and women.²



AGE

As you age, your risk for heart disease increases. About 82 percent of people who die of coronary heart disease are 65 or older.¹



GENDER

Heart disease kills more women than men, although men have higher rates of being diagnosed with heart disease.^{2,3}

Since you can't do anything about your heredity, age or gender, it's even more important for you to **manage the risk factors that can be changed**.

Risk Factors You CAN Control



DIABETES

Diabetes significantly increases your risk of developing cardiovascular disease. In fact, at least 65 percent of people with diabetes die from some form of heart or blood vessel disease.¹



SMOKING

Smokers are 2-4 times more likely to develop coronary heart disease than of nonsmokers. Just smoking one pack of cigarettes a day doubles your risk of having a heart attack.¹



HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION)

One in three adults living in the United States have high blood pressure.² For blacks, the prevalence of high blood pressure is among the highest in the world.²



HIGH CHOLESTEROL

Only 47.3 percent of adult Americans have healthy cholesterol levels.² Too much cholesterol (a waxy, fat-like substance) can build up in blood vessels, slowing and possibly blocking blood flow.



OBESITY

Overall, 68 percent of adult Americans are overweight or obese.¹ Black and Latino American women have a higher rate of obesity, which puts them at a higher risk of developing heart disease.¹



INACTIVITY

The risk of heart disease increases with physical inactivity. Women, Black and Latino Americans are more likely to be inactive than white men.¹

1. "American Heart Association, Risk Factors and Coronary Heart Disease. Available at: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4726>. Accessed March 17, 2014."

2. "Go AS, Mozaffarian D, Roger VL, et al. Heart disease and stroke statistics - 2014 update. A report from the American Heart Association. Circulation 2014; 129: e28-e292."

3. "American Heart Association, Common Myths About Heart Disease. Available at: https://www.goredforwomen.org/about-heart-disease/facts_about_heart_disease_in_women-sub-category/myths-about-heart-disease/. Accessed March 17, 2014."