

HealthMart 2009
Decreasing Your Risk for Heart Attack
By Annie Stuart

Are you at risk for coronary heart disease? That's when the blood vessels that supply blood and oxygen to your heart narrow, putting your heart at great risk. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chances of having a heart attack.

First for the risk factors you can't do a thing about:

Your risk for heart disease increases with age. Three out of four people who die from coronary heart disease are at least 65 years old. Men are also at greater risk, but the odds get worse for women as they age. In fact, older women are more likely than older men to die of a heart attack within a few weeks. Heredity and race also play a role. African-Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans, for example, are at greater risk than Caucasians.

Now for the good news: you can do a *great* deal to control many risks. Ask yourself the following questions. Then focus on what you *can* change. . . and take action, starting today.

- **Are you a smoker?** Smoking doubles or even quadruples your risk of coronary heart disease. It's easier said than done, but there's no way to avoid it: quit smoking!
- **Do you have high blood cholesterol?** Higher than 240 mg/dL? A fatty substance found in animal tissue and some foods, cholesterol – or, too much of it – may cause fatty deposits in your blood vessels. Aim for total cholesterol levels lower than 200 mg/dL. Exercise, a healthy diet, and sometimes medication can help.
- **Do you have high blood pressure?** Higher than 140 over 90 mmHg? This silent condition puts extra stress on your heart. Changes in diet, exercise, and weight can help, along with medication, if needed.
- **Do you spend more time on the couch than on the move?** Even moderate activity can help control high cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes. But you gain greater benefits with more vigorous exercise.
- **Are you overweight or obese?** Extra weight strains your heart. Weight at your waist is the worst. New Year's resolutions, anyone?
- **Do you have diabetes?** With this disease, your body can't control the level of sugar in your blood. If you have diabetes, treatment is essential and a healthy lifestyle more important than ever.

Some of the symptoms of a heart attack include severe chest pain, sweating, nausea, vomiting and shortness of breath. In women sometimes the signs and symptoms are different. Symptoms in women include heartburn type pain, clammy skin, dizziness and unexplained fatigue. It's very important to conduct regular medical exams with your doctor to be sure you are not at risk.

And, finally, a study looking at the diet patterns of 16,000 people in 52 countries recently provided damning evidence about Western diets. Reporting in the journal

Circulation, the investigators found that diets high in fried foods, salty snacks, eggs, and meat produced a 35 percent greater risk of heart attack. However, diets high in fruits and vegetables reduced the risk of heart attack by 30 percent.

Pretty good food for thought, don't you think? And a great place to begin making changes. Come in and talk to our pharmacist staff about ways to lower your risks or visit our web site – www.healthmart.com – to learn about ways to lowering your chances. Again, I urge you to take action today for a better and *healthier* lifestyle.
