

# Listen To Your Heart ...

*It could save your life!*

## Heart Disease

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer in the U.S. That's why it is so important to know the risk factors and early warning signs of heart disease and strive to live a heart-healthy lifestyle.

## Heart Attack Warning Signs

Call 911 right away if you have any of the following heart attack warning signs:

- discomfort or pain in your upper body or chest (such as pressure, squeezing or tightness) lasting more than a few minutes and that does not go away 5 minutes after taking one nitroglycerin tablet or one nitroglycerin spray
- discomfort or pain that moves to your shoulders, neck, arms, jaw, teeth or back
- sudden weakness and/or unusual tiredness, dizziness, sweating, nausea (upset stomach), or shortness of breath
- fainting ("passing out") or blacking out
- extreme shortness of breath.

## Take Action for Warning Signs

The key to surviving a heart attack is to recognize warning signs and get medical help right away.

If you feel heart attack symptoms, or if the symptoms get worse when you walk around or get better when you rest, do not delay! Every minute matters.

- Stop whatever you are doing right away.
- If you take nitroglycerin, sit down and take it as directed.
- **Call 911.** Do not wait more than 5 minutes after you feel the symptoms to call for help.

If you are not sure about what you are feeling, call your clinic and ask to talk with a doctor or nurse.

## Risks You Cannot Control

- **Family history and genetics.** You are at an increased risk for heart attack if your father or mother has had heart problems or a heart attack. **Important:** Talk with your doctor about your family history.
- **Age.** The risk for heart disease increases for men older than 55 and women older than 60.
- **Gender.** Men develop heart disease earlier than women.

## Risks You Can Control

### Tobacco use

- People who smoke cigarettes are 2 to 4 times more likely to have heart disease than people who do not smoke. Tobacco use causes heart disease and stroke. It also increases your heart rate, blood pressure and workload of your heart.
  - In 1 year of quitting smoking, your risk of heart disease is reduced by more than half.

**(over)**

## High blood pressure

- Blood pressure is the amount of pressure within the walls of your arteries. The top number measures the pressure during heartbeats. The bottom number measures the pressure between heartbeats. You have high blood pressure if you usually have a top number of 130 or higher or a bottom number of 80 or higher.
  - You can lower your blood pressure if you eat less salt, get regular exercise, stop smoking, lose weight (if overweight) or take medicine(s) to lower blood pressure.

## High cholesterol

- Cholesterol is a fat-like, waxy substance found in all the cells of your body. It is needed to make hormones, vitamin D and help with the digestion of food.
- Your liver makes all the cholesterol your body needs. You can also get cholesterol from the food you eat. Cholesterol moves through your blood in packages known as lipoproteins.
- Low density lipoprotein (LDL) is called the “bad” cholesterol. High levels of LDL can increase your risk of getting heart disease.
  - To help lower your LDL, exercise, lose weight (if overweight), and eat a diet that is low in saturated fat and trans fat, high in fiber, and has plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- High density lipoprotein (HDL) is called the “good” cholesterol. It carries cholesterol from other parts of your body to the liver where it is removed from your body.
  - To help raise your HDL, exercise, lose weight (if overweight) and quit smoking.
- If lifestyle changes do not lower your LDL enough, you may need to take a cholesterol-lowering medicine. Talk with your health care provider about which type of treatment is right for you.

## Exercise

- Exercise has many benefits, such as lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, managing weight and strengthening your heart muscle.
  - You should try to exercise most, if not all, days of the week. Just 10 to 30 minutes of moderate activity (such as walking) can provide benefits. Being physically fit may also help increase your survival rate if you have a heart attack.

## Diabetes

- If you have diabetes, you are at an increased risk for heart problems because of the disease’s effect on your blood vessels. When diabetes is not under control, a build-up of glucose in your blood leads to an increase in triglycerides, which hardens your blood vessels.
  - Diabetes is a lifelong disease that cannot be cured, but can be managed.
  - To reduce your risk for heart disease, control your glucose and lipid levels, manage your blood pressure, get regular exercise, control your weight, watch your diet and do not smoke.

## For More Information

- Allina Health Class Registration or Allina Health Physician Referral: 612-262-3333 or 1-800-877-7878 (classes, support groups, events and services at Allina Health locations, and to find a doctor)
- [allinahealth.org](http://allinahealth.org)
- American Heart Association: 1-800-242-8721

If you have questions about your health, talk with your health care provider.