

The Facts About Cardiovascular Disease



What is Cardiovascular Disease?

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in the United States. It causes more than 1 in 4 deaths. CVD is the name for many different heart problems. Not treating CVD may lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Am I at Risk for CVD?

Anyone can get CVD. It occurs when plaque builds up in arteries. Plaque is a buildup of fats that coat artery walls. This buildup causes the arteries to narrow over time, making it hard for blood to flow to the heart.

An unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity and/or smoking increase your risk for CVD. Conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes may also increase your risk. Ask your Primary Care Provider (PCP) how to prevent or treat these health problems.

How is CVD Diagnosed?

Your PCP can use different types of tests to find out if you have CVD. These tests include:

- Electrocardiograms (ECG or EKG)
- Exercise stress tests
- Coronary angiograms (x-rays that show inside your arteries)
- Chest x-rays

Talk to your PCP about which tests may be right for you.

Can I Prevent CVD?

There are many lifestyle changes you can make to lower your risk of CVD:

- **Follow a healthy diet:** eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. Choose foods low in saturated fat, sodium and cholesterol.
- **Be physically active:** routine physical activity can lower many CVD risk factors including high blood pressure and excess weight. The more you are active, the more you will benefit.
- **Avoid tobacco use:** tobacco exposure increases your risk for heart disease. If you use tobacco, it is best to stop all together. See your PCP for help quitting.
- **Limit alcohol use:** drinking too much alcohol can cause high blood pressure and other heart complications.
- **Prevent, control or treat current health problems:** talk to your PCP if you have diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure. These health problems can increase your risk of having CVD.

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How is CVD Treated?

Making lifestyle changes is the easiest way to treat CVD. Medication is another common treatment. If lifestyle changes and medication are not enough, you may need surgery to treat your CVD.

Where Can I Find More Information?

American Heart Association



www.americanheart.org



800-AHA-USA1 (800-242-8721)

American Stroke Association



www.strokeassociation.org



888-4-Stroke (888-478-7653)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention:



www.cdc.gov/dhdsp

MedlinePlus:



www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus

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Hypertension Action Plan

CARDIOVASCULAR

About 1 in 3 adults in the United States have hypertension, or high blood pressure. With proper drug therapy and lifestyle changes, you can effectively manage your hypertension.

Directions: Read through the entire tool before meeting with your doctor. Fill in as much information as you can. Then show it to your doctor and fill in the rest of the medical information together. Although it is not required, you and your doctor may choose to sign the tool to show that you both agree with the plan.

Medication Management

List all of the medications you currently take. Your doctor can review this list and help you determine if any medication changes are needed.

Name	How much to take	When to take it	Reason for taking it

Blood Pressure Monitoring

It is important to consistently check your blood pressure. The reading consists of 2 numbers—systolic pressure (the top number) and diastolic pressure (the bottom number). Systolic pressure refers to the pressure created when your heart beats while pumping blood. Diastolic pressure refers to the pressure created while your heart is at rest or in between beats.

My blood pressure reading GOAL: _____ Systolic/ _____ Diastolic Date: _____

Date/Time	Reading		Comments
	Blood Pressure	Heart Rate (Pulse)	
	/		
	/		
	/		
	/		
	/		

Contact physician if either number exceeds: _____ Systolic/ _____ Diastolic

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Salt/Sodium Control

Salt contains sodium. It is important to read food labels and learn which foods are high in salt or sodium, because these can raise your blood pressure. Eat only small amounts of foods that are high in salt or sodium. Consult with your doctor to learn how much sodium you should consume per day.

Below are 3 foods high in salt/sodium that I can cut back on right now.

① _____ ② _____ ③ _____

Weight Reduction Planning

Small changes in your diet can make a big difference. When you eat less fat, you are likely to eat fewer calories. Losing 5 pounds can help lower your blood pressure.

Current Weight: _____

My Weight	In 3 months	In 6 months	In 1 year
Date			
Weight			

Below are 4 things that I can begin to do right now to reduce my weight.

① _____ ② _____ ③ _____ ④ _____

Exercise/Activity Planning

Exercising most days of the week for at least 30 minutes daily can help lower your blood pressure. If you prefer, you can break up a day's exercise into three 10-minute segments.

Below are 3 things that I can begin to do right now to increase my level of activity.

① _____ ② _____ ③ _____

Smoking Status

The message to stop smoking is not a new one. However, quitting smoking may be the single most beneficial thing you can do to lower your blood pressure, as well as to reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

I currently smoke _____ packs or _____ cigarettes per day

GOAL: Reduce to _____ packs or _____ cigarettes per day

GOAL: Quit by _____ (date)

My physician and I have discussed some steps that I can take today and in the future to lower my blood pressure. I understand why it is important to control my blood pressure, and I choose to take the steps necessary to control it.

Patient Signature: _____ **Date** _____

Physician Signature: _____ **Date:** _____