

What Causes Coronary Heart Disease?

Heart disease is caused by cholesterol and plaque buildup in the inside walls of the coronary arteries. More than 200 risk factors have been associated with CHD. Only a few are considered major, however, and have proven therapies to lower risk.

The risk factors for heart disease can be divided into:

1) Non-Modifiable Risk Factors (those you cannot change)

- Age: Women ≥ 55 years old and men ≥ 45 years old are at greater risk for heart disease.
- Gender: Men seem to be diagnosed earlier and are found to be at greater risk ten years earlier than women. Post-menopausal women have roughly the same risk of cardiac death as men 10 years younger than they are.
- Race/Ethnicity: African Americans have moderate high blood pressure twice as often as Caucasians and severe high blood pressure three times as often. As a result, their risk for heart disease is greater. African American women have a 34% higher incidence of heart disease than that of Caucasian women and African American men have a 5% greater incidence of heart disease than Caucasian men. Mexican-American men have markedly lower rates of heart disease than white men although the rates for Mexican-American women and white women are comparable.



- Heredity: People with a first-degree relative (mother, father, brother, sister) who had or has heart disease prematurely, by the age of 55 for men and 65 for women, have a greater risk of developing heart disease. Heart disease seems to be hereditary. That means children of parents with heart and blood vessel diseases are more likely to develop them. A family history of diabetes, gout (high level of uric acid), high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol also increases the risk for heart disease.
- Diabetes: People with diabetes are two to four times more likely to develop cardiovascular disease. This is mainly attributed to the variety of other risk factors diabetics often have including high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, obesity, and physical inactivity.

This resource provides brief, general information about this health care topic. It does not take the place of the instructions you receive from your health care providers. Discuss the risks and benefits of therapies with your doctor and always take medication as prescribed. For answers to other questions talk to your health care provider.

For more information or a referral, please call the NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital Preventive Cardiology Program at (212) 305-4866 or visit our website at:

<http://www.hearthealthtimes.com>.



2) Modifiable Risk Factors (those you can change)

- Blood Pressure
- Cholesterol
- Glucose Control
- Nutrition
- Physical Activity
- Psychosocial Factors (depression, social isolation, anger, anxiety)
- Smoking

3) Novel Risk Factors

- Homocysteine
- Infection (for example, chlamydia)
- Inflammatory Markers/Clotting Factors (C-reactive protein, fibrinogen)
- Lipoprotein (a) or Lp(a)

This resource provides brief, general information about this health care topic. It does not take the place of the instructions you receive from your health care providers. Discuss the risks and benefits of therapies with your doctor and always take medication as prescribed. For answers to other questions talk to your health care provider.

For more information or a referral, please call the NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital Preventive Cardiology Program at (212) 305-4866 or visit our website at:

<http://www.hearthealthtimes.com>.

