Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Visit Your Doctor Regularly

Being honest about your risk factors will get you the most realistic assessment and help your doctor develop a plan to lower your overall risk. Nothing replaces a discussion with your doctor or health care provider. Talk to your doctor about your risk factors. Choose two to three questions most relevant to you and write down the answers.

Here are some questions you can ask your doctor:

• Do I have heart disease?
• What tests should I have, and how often, to monitor my risk factors for developing heart disease and stroke?
• What do my test results mean?
• Are my blood pressure numbers within a normal range?
• Are my cholesterol numbers within a normal range?
• What sort of plan do you recommend for me to lower my risk?
• Can you help me plan a safe weight loss and exercise program?
• What are the possible side effects of the medications I’ve been prescribed?

Specific questions for women to ask a doctor:

It is important to know how heart disease manifests itself in women. These questions are provided to encourage a meaningful dialogue between you and your healthcare provider regarding heart disease.

• What is the difference between heart disease, heart attack and heart failure?
• What are my risk factors for heart disease?
• What are the warning signs or symptoms of heart disease?
• How do warning signs differ for men and women?
• How will menopause affect my heart?
• How does smoking affect my heart?
• Do I need to lose or gain weight for my health?
• What kind of physical exercise is right for me?
• What is a healthful eating plan for me?
• What is the difference between good and bad cholesterol and what should my levels be?
• Based on my history and risk factors what can I do to lower my risk of heart disease?
• What kinds of tests are used to diagnose heart disease?
• Which ones are most appropriate for women?
Young athletes who answer “yes” to any of the questions below should see a heart doctor:

**Patient history:**
- I’ve passed out when startled, during exercise, or when feeling an emotion.
- I’ve fainted or passed out after exercise.
- I’ve had extreme fatigue associated with exercise.
- I’ve had unusual or extreme shortness of breath during exercise.
- I’ve had discomfort, pain or pressure in my chest during exercise.
- I’ve been diagnosed with an unexplained seizure disorder.

**Family history:**
- There has been an unexpected or unexplained death (includes SIDS, car accident, drowning, others) before age 50 in my family.
- Someone in my family died of a heart problem before age 50.
- Someone in my family has unexplained fainting or seizures.