What Black Americans Need to Know About Heart Disease

In the U.S., African American men and women are 30% more likely to die from heart disease than whites.\(^1\)

More Black Americans die of heart disease than the next three causes of death combined, including cancer.\(^2\)

- Almost half of Black women (43%) and Black men (40%) have high blood pressure.\(^3\)
- Nearly 70% of Black men are overweight or obese and 82% of Black women are overweight or obese. Obesity leads to many diseases and conditions, including high blood pressure and diabetes which can cause heart disease.\(^4\)
- One in three of Black women and Black men have high levels of bad cholesterol.\(^3\)
- Nearly 14% of Black men and 15% of Black women have diabetes. Almost 36% of Black men and 28% of Black women are at high risk of developing diabetes.\(^4\)
- African Americans are also more than twice as likely as whites to suffer from peripheral artery disease (PAD). The disease is more severe and results in a greater reduction in walking distance, speed, and/or stair climbing.\(^5\)

Heart Attack Warning Signs: Every 40 seconds in the United States, someone dies of heart disease.\(^6\) Don’t wait more than a few minutes to react to these signs and symptoms:\(^7\)

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<th>Chest discomfort: Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.</th>
<th>Discomfort in other areas of the upper body: Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.</th>
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<td>Shortness of breath: Often with minimal exertion of any kind.</td>
<td>Other signs of distress: Cold sweats, nausea/vomiting, lightheadedness or dizziness, palpitations, or unusual fatigue.</td>
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If you suspect these symptoms, seek help immediately. If you or someone you know is having one or more of the symptoms, call 9-1-1 for the fastest way to receive lifesaving treatment.
How can you tell if you are at risk?

Many different risk factors (conditions or lifestyle habits) can affect your chance of developing heart disease. It's important to understand which risk factors affect you and what actions you can take to lower your risk of developing heart disease.

Risk factors you CANNOT control.⁸

Increasing age
- Women: are you post-menopausal or over age 55?
- Men: are you over age 45?

Family History
- Does anyone in your immediate family have a history of heart disease or diabetes?

Sex
- Men typically develop heart disease at younger ages than women. Women are at high risk after they go through menopause

Risk factors you CAN control.
- Do you smoke?
- Do you have diabetes?

High blood pressure
- Is your blood pressure 140/90 mmHg or higher? (normal is below 120/80 mmHg)

High cholesterol
- Is your total cholesterol over 200 mg/dl?

Obesity – Are you 30 pounds or more over your recommended weight?
- Women: is your waist greater than 35 inches?
- Men: is your waist greater than 40 inches?

Inactivity
- Do you exercise less than three times a week?

Each yes puts you at higher risk for developing heart disease.

Know what tests you should have to monitor your risk factors for developing heart disease and stroke.

Talk to your doctor. Know your risk factors. Take charge of your heart health.