



CONTROLLING RISK FACTORS THAT CAUSE HEART ARTERY BLOCKAGES

High blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes, smoking and being overweight increase your risk of heart problems. If you have any of these conditions ask your caregivers for help to control them.



Signs and symptoms of a heart attack may start slowly or they may happen suddenly.

What is a Heart Attack?

Your heart is always working to pump blood to your entire body. Blood carries oxygen and other things that your body needs in order to do its work. Your heart needs a constant supply of oxygen-rich blood for itself as well. The blood vessels that carry blood to your heart muscle are called coronary arteries. Sometimes one of the coronary arteries becomes completely blocked. If this happens suddenly, the heart muscle goes without oxygen and starts to die. This is called a myocardial infarction (also called MI or a heart attack).

What's the difference between angina and a heart attack?

Angina is chest pain, tightness or discomfort that comes and goes. It is your heart muscle's way of telling you that it is not getting enough oxygen. Usually it means that an artery carrying blood to your heart muscle is partly blocked. Angina can be relieved with rest, oxygen or special medicine. Angina does not cause the heart muscle to die. Angina can be a warning sign that you may be at risk for a heart attack.

What are signs and symptoms of a heart attack?

Signs and symptoms of a heart attack may start slowly or they may happen suddenly. The most common signs are chest pain, tightness or pressure. The discomfort may feel crushing, tight or heavy. The discomfort may range from mild to severe. It may spread to the neck, jaw, shoulders, back, left arm or upper stomach area. It may feel like indigestion or burning under the breast bone in your upper chest. Other signs may include sweating, nausea, vomiting or trouble breathing. Your skin may be pale, cool or clammy. You may feel lightheaded or weak.

What do I do if I get these symptoms?

If you think you are having a heart attack, take an aspirin and call 911. If you are not sure, and any of the above symptoms continue longer than ten minutes, call 911. Do not wait any longer. If you are having a heart attack and you wait, it could be too late. Do not drive to the hospital.

How is a heart attack diagnosed?

If you call an ambulance or go to the Emergency Department with chest pain or discomfort, the nurses will do an electrocardiogram (ECG) immediately. Better yet, if you call an ambulance, the ambulance personnel will often do an ECG in your living room! If this shows definite evidence of a heart attack, you will be rushed to a catheterization laboratory for emergency heart catheterization. If this does not show a definite heart attack, you will be given blood tests and other tests over several hours to determine if you have had a mild heart attack.

How is a heart attack treated?

If the ECG shows a definite heart attack, you will be rushed to a heart catheterization laboratory for emergency heart catheterization. In this procedure, a doctor uses a long flexible tube called a catheter to inject X-ray dye into your heart arteries to identify the heart artery blockage. The doctor will insert a balloon or stent through the catheter into your heart artery to open the blockage.

You may be given blood thinners to keep you from having more blood

flow problems in your heart. You may also receive nitroglycerin, morphine or another kind of pain medicine. You may need medicine to help your heart beat normally or decrease how hard your heart needs to work. If blood tests show that you have had a heart attack, your doctors may recommend a heart catheterization before you leave the hospital. If you have had a heart attack, controlling other risk factors is very important. Controlling your risk factors will decrease the chance of having another heart attack.

What is cardiac rehabilitation?

Cardiac rehabilitation is a program at Evangelical that helps you feel better after having a heart problem. It may also decrease your risk of having heart problems in the future. During cardiac rehab, you will learn to live a more heart-healthy lifestyle. You may also learn how to exercise safely to strengthen your muscles and heart. For more information, call (570) 522-2676.

What are risk factors?

There are certain things that increase your chance of having heart artery blockages and heart attacks. They are called risk factors. Some risk factors you cannot change, such as your genes. Risk factors that you can control include:

- obesity
- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- high blood cholesterol
- lack of exercise
- smoking

If you have any of these, keeping them under control decreases your risk of developing heart artery blockages or a heart attack.

How do I reduce my weight?

Being overweight increases your risk of health conditions such as heart problems, high blood pressure and diabetes. To lose weight you must eat fewer calories and get regular exercise. Aim for a slow, steady weight loss.



Staying Strong—one of many exercise classes offered through Evangelical Community Health Education.

Call (570) 768-3200 for more information.

Limit foods and drinks that are high in sugar, such as candy, cookies, regular soda and sweetened drinks.



What is a heart-healthy diet?

A heart-healthy diet includes many different things. The following tips will help you improve the quality of your diet.

- Eat whole grain foods more often. They are healthier and provide extra fiber in your diet. Examples include whole grain wheat breads and pastas, oatmeal, brown rice and bulgur.
- Eat a variety of vegetables every day. Eat dark, leafy greens such as spinach, kale, collard and mustard greens. Yellow and orange vegetables are good, such as carrots, sweet potatoes and winter squash. They are all good sources of vitamins and minerals.
- Eat a variety of fruits every day. Canned fruit in its own juice or light-syrup is a good choice. Fruit juice has very little fiber. Limit fruit juices; they are high in calories.
- Eat low-fat dairy foods. Drink fat-free (skim) milk or 1% milk. Eat fat-free yogurt and low-fat cottage cheese.
- Choose protein foods that are lower in fat, such as beans or other legumes like split peas or lentils. Choose fish, turkey, poultry or leaner cuts of red meat. Before cooking, cut off visible fat and remove skin.
- Use less fats and oils. Try baking foods instead of frying them. Eat less high-fat foods like potato chips, french fries, doughnuts and cakes.
- Limit foods and drinks that are high in sugar, such as candy, cookies, regular soda and sweetened drinks.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. Alcoholic drinks have extra calories and can make you hungrier.
- Eat smaller portions. Avoid second helpings.
- Replace high-calorie snacks with healthier, low-calorie snacks. Choose fresh fruit, vegetables, fat-free rice cakes or air-popped popcorn instead of chips, nuts or chocolate.
- Eat regular meals. Skipping meals can lead to overeating later in the day.
- Become more physically active after checking with your caregiver. Exercise at least 30 minutes per day with activities like walking, riding a bicycle, dancing and swimming.

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a wax-like substance that is found in your body. It is a lipid, which means that it is a type of fat. Cholesterol cannot travel in the blood by itself. It is carried by special proteins called lipoproteins.

Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is called “bad cholesterol” because it causes fatty deposits in your arteries.

High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is called “good cholesterol” because it takes cholesterol back to the liver so that it can leave the body as a waste product.

There are several different kinds of fat found in food. Some fats are bad, and some are good.

- Mono-unsaturated fats do not raise your cholesterol if you eat them in moderation. They are foods such as olives, peanuts, seeds and other nuts.
- Poly-unsaturated fats are found in oils like canola, sunflower, sesame and other plant oils. These are less harmful than saturated fats.
- Omega-3 fats are found in high fat fish, such as salmon, mackerel and albacore tuna. These fats help protect against heart disease.
- Saturated, hydrogenated and trans-fats are solid at room temperature. They include butter, lard, shortening and some types of margarine. These increase blood cholesterol.

Dietary cholesterol is a type of fat that is found in animal foods and dairy products, meat, fish and poultry. Egg yolks and organ meats (liver) are high in cholesterol.

Other factors that increase your cholesterol include being overweight, age, family history, lack of exercise and other medical conditions.

How can I lower cholesterol?

Learn the different types of fats that are found in foods and read food labels. Increasing the amount of fiber in your diet may help.

Alcohol can increase cholesterol so your levels may improve if you stop drinking alcohol. Losing weight and exercising can improve cholesterol levels. If lifestyle changes alone are not enough, you may need to take cholesterol-lowering medicines.

What is hypertension?

Hypertension is also known as high blood pressure. It occurs when the blood pressing on the inside of your arteries is higher than normal. Hypertension may damage your arteries. This may make you more likely to have a stroke, heart attack, kidney problems or heart disease.

Hypertension can cause serious health problems, even if you do not feel sick. Hypertension is often called the “silent killer” because you may not have symptoms.

Many things can increase your risk of having hypertension. These include smoking, diabetes, family history of heart disease, high cholesterol and age. Hypertension can be treated with medicine and lifestyle changes.

Blood pressure is a measurement of the pressures put on the blood vessel walls. There are two parts. Systolic (the top number) is the strongest pressure felt by the blood vessel walls

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when the heart is squeezing out blood. The diastolic number (the bottom number) is the pressure put on blood vessel walls when the heart is at rest.

What are signs and symptoms of hypertension?

Most people with high blood pressure do not have any. If you do, they may be blurred vision or headache, sleepiness or confusion, nosebleeds or coughing up blood, numbness or tingling in your hands or feet and shortness of breath.

What can be done to lower blood pressure?

Tests will be done to learn why your blood pressure is high. Medicine may be needed to lower your blood pressure. If another illness is causing your high blood pressure, that illness will need to be treated.

Quit smoking and lose weight if you are overweight. Exercise if your caregiver says it is OK. Eat healthy foods low in fat and salt. Eat foods high in fiber. Decrease the amount of caffeine that you eat or drink. Learn to control stress. Limit alcohol consumption.

Quit smoking to improve your health and the health of those around you.

What about smoking?

It is never too late to quit smoking. Smoking harms your body in many ways. You are more likely to have heart disease, lung disease, cancer and other health problems if you smoke. If you quit smoking, it will improve your health and the health of those around you. Ask your caregiver for more information about how to stop smoking if you are having trouble quitting.

What about stress?

Stress may slow healing and cause illness later. Since it is hard to avoid stress, learn to control it. Learn new ways to relax such as deep breathing, meditation, relaxing muscles, music or biofeedback. Talk to someone about things that upset you.

Depression is common in persons who have had a heart attack. Your doctor may not ask you about it. If you are feeling depressed, understand that it is a normal reaction to learning you have heart problems. It can be treated. Tell your doctor about it. If your doctor is not able or willing to treat it, ask for a referral to a psychologist

or psychiatrist. Medications can make you feel much better.

If you are feeling depressed, other things you can do to feel better include getting a pet, becoming active in a church or social organization, and asking family to help out and spend time with you. Doing these things actually help prevent death and make you live longer!

What about diabetes?

There are several different forms of diabetes. In one kind of diabetes, your body does not make enough insulin. In another kind of diabetes your body does not use the insulin properly. Either way, it is important to maintain control of your blood sugars. Uncontrolled blood sugars damage body tissue and organs over time. It can damage your feet and legs leading to amputations, cause blindness, stop kidneys from working or lead to a heart attack. It is very important to monitor your blood sugar daily, exercise, lose weight, maintain your prescribed diet and take your medicine as ordered. Ask your caregiver for specifics on controlling your diabetes.

What about exercise?

The American Heart Association recommends that every person in the United States should exercise 30 minutes daily, and increase to an hour daily if you want to lose weight.

Ask your doctor before you start exercising. Exercising does not have to be hard. Walking is perfectly good exercise. Swimming and bicycling are also good. It is important to find an exercise or combination of exercises that is fun and that you will continue to do day after day.

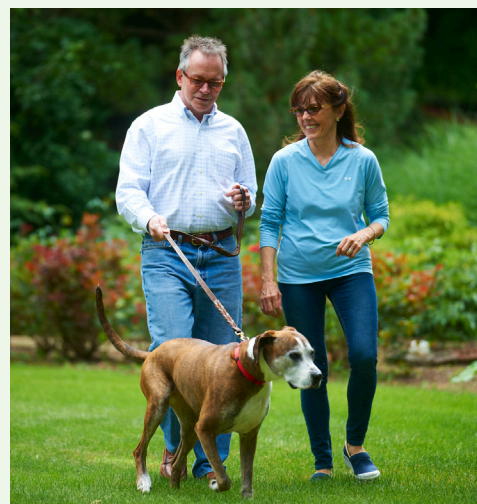
Remember that you burn 100 calories for every mile you walk. If you burn 100 calories every day for a month without eating more, you will lose about a pound. Keep that up for a year and you have lost 12 pounds. Studies show that even losing 12 pounds can improve cholesterol, diabetes and blood pressure and decrease your risk of heart attack and death.

Avoid extreme exercise if you have heart problems. In general, any kind of activity is OK if you can continue for 20 minutes without wearing yourself out. If you are shoveling snow, jogging or walking uphill and can't keep it up for 20 minutes, or if you get chest discomfort or short of breath, stop and contact your doctor.

The best exercise programs also include flexibility exercises and light weightlifting. Studies show that even older people can increase their ability to do everyday activities and enjoy life more if they do flexibility and strengthening exercises.

Cardiac rehabilitation programs will give you a good start on a regular exercise program. After you finish regular cardiac rehabilitation, you can join a long-term cardiac rehabilitation program or a walking program. For many people, the social aspects of exercising together are just as healthful as the exercise.

Exercising does not have to be hard. Walking is perfectly good exercise.



Evangelical Community Health Education offers a variety of wellness programs and fitness resources.

Call (570) 768-3200 for more information.



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