

# **EDUCATIONAL SERIES**

## **PACKET #2**

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Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—  
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# Heart Disease

Heart disease is a common term for coronary artery disease (CAD). It is the number one cause of death in both men and women over the age of 60 in the United States.

## Types

Heart disease is caused by the arteries that supply the blood to the heart become hardened and narrowed, which can then lead to the following problems:

- **Angina** – The heart muscle doesn't get as much blood and oxygen as it needs. Angina doesn't damage the heart muscle (like a heart attack would), but is a warning sign that a heart attack could occur.
- **Heart Attack** – The heart doesn't get enough blood supply for a period of time and part, or all, of the heart muscle dies.
- **Heart Failure** – The heart fails to supply the body with enough blood and oxygen. This develops slowly over time, and becomes chronic.

## Causes

Heart disease is caused by atherosclerosis – a buildup of plaque in the inner walls of

the arteries – which narrows, slows, or blocks the flow of blood to the heart.

## Risk Factors

There are controllable and uncontrollable risk factors for heart disease. For instance, you cannot control:

- Having a past heart attack or stroke
- A family history of heart disease
- Being a male 45 years or older
- Being a female 55 years or older

You can, however, control these risk factors:

- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Smoking
- Being overweight or obese
- Lack of physical activity
- Having type 2 diabetes and high blood cholesterol
- Using cocaine or amphetamines
- Metabolic syndrome

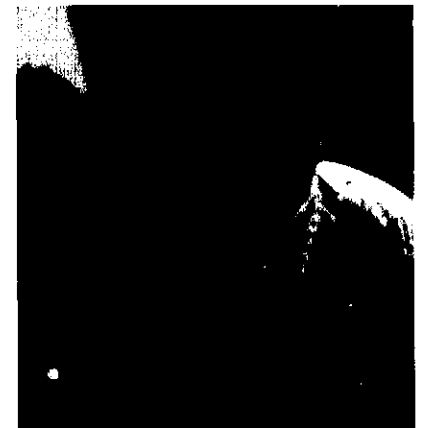
There are even more factors that can play a role in the development of heart disease, so you should make sure you are routinely tested for the following risks:

- Waist measurement of 40 inches or more for men or 35 inches or more for women.
- Elevated CRP in the blood (C-reactive protein)
- Elevated blood homocysteine levels
- Elevated blood lipoprotein A
- Elevated blood triglycerides
- Infections, like chlamydial pneumonia

## Treatment

The goals of treatment are to relieve symptoms, control or reduce risk factors, or stop or slow further damage to the arteries and prevent and treat cardiac events. Treatment includes:

- Self-care and prevention measures
- Medications
- Procedures to open blocked



or narrowed arteries or to bypass them

- Cardiac rehabilitation

### Self-Care/Prevention

- Get regular medical check-ups.
- Make sure your doctor checks your blood pressure at each visit or at least every two years.
- Make sure your blood cholesterol gets checked at least every five years.
- Don't smoke.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Take all medications as prescribed (that also means making sure you take them!)
- Ask your doctor about taking a low-dose of aspirin daily to help prevent heart disease.
- Watch for signs of diabetes and see your doctor if you have any.
- Follow a diet low in saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol. Limit sodium intake to 1,500 to 2,400 milligrams per day (dependent on body weight and/or your doctor's recommendations.)
- Get regular exercise.
- Manage stress by practicing relaxation techniques.
- Drink in moderation (no more than two drinks per day for men; one drink per day for women and people older than age 65.) Check with your doctor to find out if and how much you can drink.

- Get your doctor's advice about taking vitamins, minerals and other supplements or herbal products.

### Warning Signs

Most people are aware of the signs and symptoms of a heart attack, but the chances someone would recognize the warning signs of the other types of heart disease – angina and heart failure – is less likely because they happen more slowly, over time:

- **Angina** – Pain, discomfort or a squeezing pressure in chest; aching tooth, jaw or neck; symptoms go away with rest; may occur with anger, excitement or exertion.
- **Heart Failure** – Shortness of breath; extreme tiredness and weakness; swelling in the lower legs, ankles or feet; dry cough or cough with pink, frothy mucus; rapid weight gain; rapid heartbeat.

## Did you know...?

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

*Source: American Heart Association*

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# Cholesterol and Your Heart Health

## *The secret number you need to know about*

If you know the number of your total cholesterol, that's good. But is it good enough?

### What's in a Number

There are two main types of fat in your blood – cholesterol and triglycerides. In the past, doctors thought that total cholesterol was a good indicator of the risk for heart disease, heart attack, diabetes and stroke. The lower your low-density lipoprotein (LDL) numbers and the higher your high-density lipoprotein (HDL) numbers, the better, right? While measuring total cholesterol, HDL and LDL cholesterol is helpful, experts now know that to truly assess your risk for heart attack, heart disease and stroke, it's not as simple as just measuring these numbers.

### The Lipoprotein Link

Research indicates that the blockage of arteries that leads to heart disease is caused by the amount and size of the lipoprotein particles that carry your cholesterol throughout your body. These lipoprotein particles can build up in your arteries. No matter how much cholesterol you take in when you eat, or genetically inherit, it's the number and size of these lipoprotein particles that carry it that contributes to heart disease, heart attack etc. Think of it this way: These lipoproteins are the cars that carry passengers (cholesterol) along the highway –

it's not the number of "passengers" in a car that causes a traffic jam (blocked artery), it's the number of cars!

### Your Particle Number

The number of and particle size of lipoproteins in your blood are the measurements that can really help your doctor determine your true risk for heart attack, heart disease and stroke. A screening test called a NMR LipoProfile is recently available, which provides a more detailed look at how your particles measure up, better assessing your risk for complications. The number of LDL particles circulating in your blood is the most important factor in measuring your heart health. The secret number or "magic" number is your LDL particle number:

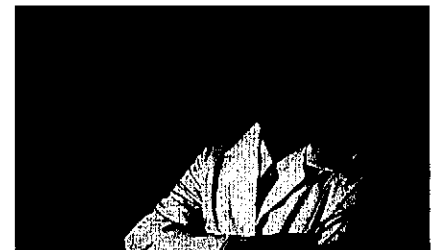
- How many there are; and
- How big they are.

The more LDL particles you have, the higher your risk. The smaller your LDL particles are, the higher your risk is as well. Generally, the lower your number of total LDL particles, and the larger the size of these particles – the better.

### Getting Tested

Currently, most patients, and

many doctors, are not even aware that a simple blood test exists that can analyze your other cholesterol numbers in such detail. Those that do, however, realize it is an invaluable tool necessary for early prediction, prevention and treatment of heart attack, heart disease and stroke. If you have a family history or other risk factors for heart attack, heart disease and stroke, or have already been diagnosed with high cholesterol (even if you are already being treated for it) you should ask your doctor about having an NMR LipoProfile test. It is currently covered by many private insurance carriers, although different rates and coverage do apply. If your insurance doesn't cover it, have it done anyway. It is relatively inexpensive, and just may be the best money you ever spend!



## Did you know...?

Medical science shows that you can be at an increased risk for heart disease even if you have normal cholesterol levels. Ask your doctor what your LDL, LDL-C and LDL-P numbers are. You could be at risk, especially if you have diabetes.

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# Keep Your Cholesterol in Check

Cholesterol is a type of fat produced by the liver. Essential to proper functioning of your body, it aids in hormone production, supports nerve and brain development, helps the liver digest fats, and is the key substance in every cell of the body.

Cholesterol is important to your health, but you can have too much of a good thing! Cholesterol travels to your cells through your bloodstream. Because it is a fat, it does not mix well with water or blood, and must be wrapped in protein. This is called lipoprotein cholesterol, which is categorized into two forms:

- LDL, low density lipoprotein, called bad cholesterol
- HDL, high density lipoprotein, called good cholesterol

## Cholesterol Levels

Cholesterol levels can be measured three ways: total cholesterol, LDL levels and HDL levels. Optimum levels for each should be:

- Total cholesterol level = 200 or less
- LDL level = 130 or less
- HDL level = 60 or more reduces the risk of heart disease.
- High LDL cholesterol increases the risk of plaque build-up in the artery walls, causing them to narrow, which contributes

directly to heart disease, stroke and other circulatory problems.

## Cholesterol Screenings

Getting your cholesterol checked regularly is important to warding off heart disease. Start having your cholesterol checked every five years, beginning at age 20. If you find you have an elevated cholesterol level, you may have to have it checked more often. Children over the age of two should also be checked regularly if there is a family history of high cholesterol or heart disease earlier than age 55.

## Self-Care Tips

The primary sources of cholesterol in our diets are eggs, dairy products and red meat. You can keep your cholesterol in check by balancing the amount of these foods that you eat, along with the following healthy eating habits:

- Consume more fish, poultry, lean beef, pork and lamb instead of sausage and other organ meats.
- Drink skim or low-fat milk.
- Eat sherbet, sorbet or ice milk in place of ice cream.

- Eat eggs in moderation, or eat only the egg whites. According to the American Heart Association, one egg yolk contains 213 milligrams of dietary cholesterol (the daily recommended cholesterol limit is less than 300 milligrams).
- Eat steamed vegetables instead of buttered or fried vegetables.
- Consume butter in moderation. A good substitute is trans fat-free soft margarine.
- Choose baked potatoes over French fries.
- Use unsaturated vegetable oils.
- Choose pretzels or air-popped popcorn instead of potato chips as your snack.
- Stay away from pastries and doughnuts.
- Eat pancakes or cereal with low-fat milk for breakfast, rather than eggs and bacon.
- Eat more fruit.



## Did you know...?

It is important to keep your "bad" and "good" cholesterol levels in check to ward off certain diseases and remain healthy, because high cholesterol is only one risk factor for developing heart disease.

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# High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a condition in which resting blood pressure is consistently measured at 140/90 or greater. Nearly one in three adults in the U.S. has high blood pressure.

Each time the heart beats, it pumps out blood into the arteries. Blood pressure is highest when the heart beats – called *systolic pressure* – and lowest when at rest (*diastolic pressure*.) This is why blood pressure is always given as two numbers, such as 120/80 – which is considered the normal range. Once the level reaches 140/90 or above, it is considered high blood pressure. With this condition, the heart and arteries work harder, and the chances of a stroke, heart attack, and kidney problems are greater.

## Causes and Risk Factors

No single specific cause has been identified in people with high blood pressure, and therefore research is ongoing. In some people, it is the result of another medical problem or medicine. When the cause is known, this is called *secondary high blood pressure*. Research has shown that the following factors put one more at risk for high blood pressure:

- Obesity
- Being African-American
- If male, being over age 45; if female, being over age 55
- A family history

- Having prehypertension (blood pressure in the 120-139/80-89 range)
- Excessive salt and/or alcohol consumption
- Not enough potassium in the diet
- Being physically inactive
- Having long-lasting stress
- Smoking
- If female, taking certain oral contraceptives

## Symptoms

Those with high blood pressure may have it for years without knowing, due to its lack of symptoms. The only way to find out is to have blood pressure checked during every visit to the doctor.

## The Importance of Treatment

The first and best course of action when high blood pressure is discovered is to change eating and exercise habits. However, sometimes even when a person makes healthy changes, blood pressure remains high. In that case, a physician will most likely prescribe a blood pressure medication. If left untreated, high blood pressure can cause:

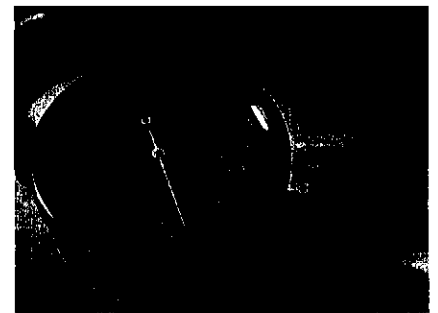
- Enlarging of the heart, which leads to heart failure

- Aneurysms in the arteries of the heart, brain, legs, intestines or spleen
- Narrowing of the blood vessels in the kidney, leading to kidney failure
- Hardening of the arteries, which can cause a heart attack, stroke, kidney failure or leg amputation
- Blood vessels bursting in the eyes

## Prevention

High blood pressure can easily be prevented. Some of the best ways to thwart the condition include:

- Limiting salt, fats and alcohol
- Eating healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products
- Losing excess weight and maintaining a healthy weight
- Being physically active
- Quitting smoking



## Did you know...?

Those with high blood pressure often exhibit few or no symptoms, and the condition is thereby often referred to as the "silent killer".

**EDUCATIONAL SERIES FOR CITY OF FINDLAY FITNESS STIPEND – PACKET #2**

LIVE WELL, WORK WELL INFORMATION INCLUDED IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE:

Heart Disease  
Cholesterol and Your Heart Health  
Keep Your Cholesterol in Check  
High Blood Pressure

Please rate the statements below as either true or false

Circle One

- |    |   |      |       |
|----|---|------|-------|
| 1. | There are controllable and uncontrollable risk factors for heart disease.                         | True | False |
| 2. | There are three main types of fat in your blood.  | True | False |
| 3. | Getting your cholesterol checked regularly is important to warding off heart disease.             | True | False |
| 4. | Those with high blood pressure may have it for years without knowing due to its lack of symptoms. | True | False |

I have read the four Live Well, Work Well publications listed above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date