



Preventing Heart Disease

# Introduction to Heart Disease

Chapter 1, Lesson 1



Make lifestyle changes for a healthy heart—A healthy heart can keep your whole body healthy!

## Take Control of Your Heart Health!

**In this workshop, you will learn about heart disease, its causes, the importance of screenings, and how lifestyle factors influence heart health.** You may not be able to control your genetics, but this workshop will help you understand how the choices you make may prevent heart disease.

A healthy heart is primarily maintained by a healthy lifestyle. Medication cannot fix an unhealthy lifestyle. For some people, even if you're able to improve your lifestyle, medication may still be necessary to keep you heart-healthy. Talk to your doctor about your risks.

### What is Heart Disease?

**Heart disease is a term used to describe several health issues** such as heart attack, stroke and heart failure. The most common cause of heart disease is the blockage of the coronary arteries (the blood vessels that pump blood to and from your heart).

### Heart Health = Total Body Health

**A healthy heart can keep your whole body healthy.** Your heart pumps blood throughout your body, which in turn distributes oxygen and nutrients and removes waste. When this process is affected by heart disease, it can have negative effects on your health.

## Understanding Your Risk Factors

Some of the risk factors for heart disease are out of your control. These include:

**Age**—as you age, your blood vessels become less flexible and your arteries thicken. The risk for women substantially increases after menopause.

**Sex**—Men tend to develop it earlier in life than women. However, more women than men die of heart disease.<sup>1</sup>

**Family history**—if you have a relative with heart disease, you're at greater risk.

**Race**—African Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans and Hawaiians have a higher risk for heart disease.<sup>2</sup>



According to the American Heart Association, **there are 7 areas you can control** to prevent heart disease.<sup>3</sup>

- 1. Tobacco use**—the leading cause of preventable deaths. Smokers are more likely to have heart disease and to die as a result of it.
- 2. High blood pressure**—damages and may cause blocked arteries.
- 3. High cholesterol**—results in the blockage of arteries, one of the major causes of heart disease.
- 4. Blood sugar**—high blood glucose levels increase the threat of diabetes which shares some of the same risk factors of heart disease. Diabetics are more likely to develop heart disease. Heart disease is a leading cause of death in diabetics.
- 5. Weight**—people who are overweight are more likely to develop heart disease.
- 6. Nutrition**—eating a heart-healthy diet can reduce your risk by influencing your weight, blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol.
- 7. Physical activity**—inactivity raises your risk from not working out the body’s most important muscle and increases the likelihood of weight gain, both of which can have negative effects on your heart and your overall health.

## Next Steps

- 1. Review Lesson 2:** Heart Disease Risk Calculator
- 2. Read Lesson 3:** “Importance of Health Screenings”
- 3. Take the Chapter 1 Quiz**



### Sources

- [heart.org](http://heart.org), American Heart Association, American Stroke Association, Women & Cardiovascular Diseases. 2013.
- [heart.org](http://heart.org), American Heart Association, Heart and Stroke Statistics. 2015.
- [heart.org](http://heart.org), American Heart Association. What Are My Risks for Getting Heart Disease? 2015.