



WELLNESS

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MEN AND HEART DISEASE – WHAT ARE THE RISKS

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men in the United States, killing 357,761 men in 2019 – that's about 1 in every 4 male deaths.



Half of the men who die suddenly of coronary heart disease had no previous symptoms. Even if you have no symptoms, you may still be at risk for heart disease.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS FOR HEART DISEASE?

In health data from 2013-2016, 47% of men had hypertension, a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can result in hardening and thickening of your arteries, narrowing the vessels through which blood flows.

Several other medical conditions and lifestyle choices can also put people at a higher risk for heart disease, including

- **Diabetes:** Diabetes increases your risk of heart disease. Both conditions share similar risk factors, such as obesity and high blood pressure.
- **Overweight and obesity:** Excess weight typically worsens other heart disease risk factors.
- **Unhealthy diet:** A diet that's high in fat, salt, sugar and cholesterol can contribute to the development of heart disease.
- **Physical inactivity:** Lack of exercise also is associated with many forms of heart disease and some of its other risk factors as well.
- **Excessive alcohol use:** The Dietary Guidelines for Americans defines moderate drinking as up to 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men.
- **Tobacco use:** Nicotine tightens your blood vessels, and carbon monoxide can damage their inner lining, making them more susceptible to atherosclerosis. Heart attacks are more common in smokers than in nonsmokers.

To lower your chances of getting heart disease, it's important to do the following:

- Know your blood pressure. Having uncontrolled blood pressure can lead to heart disease. High blood pressure has no symptoms, so it's important to have your blood pressure checked regularly.
- Talk to your doctor or health care team about whether you should be tested for diabetes. Having uncontrolled diabetes raises your risk of heart disease.
- Quit smoking. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, learn ways to quit.
- Discuss checking your blood cholesterol and triglycerides with your doctor.
- Make healthy food choices. Being overweight or obese raises your risk of heart disease.
- Limit how much alcohol you drink to one drink a day.
- Manage stress levels by finding healthy ways to cope with stress.
- Get your annual physical. Knowing your risk can help you and your doctor talk about whether you need to lower your risk. Together, you can decide what treatment is best for you.

Source: [cdc.gov/heartdisease/men.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/men.htm)

Explore more at the [Chiefs Wellness Program homepage](#) »