

GUIDELINES FOR CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH HEART DISEASE



Blood Pressure Reading High blood pressure (hypertension) can lead to a heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure. Know your blood pressure reading. If your blood pressure is high, your doctor may prescribe medication that reduces your blood pressure and keeps it in your target range. You should have a thorough blood pressure check at least once a year.



Lipid Profile High levels of lipids, or fat, in the blood can lead to a heart attack. A simple blood test can measure the level of lipids in your blood. A lipid profile will measure the amount of total cholesterol, good cholesterol (HDL), bad cholesterol (LDL), and triglycerides. By knowing your lipid levels, you and your doctor can develop a plan to reduce your risk of a heart attack. You should have your lipids checked at least once a year or at your doctor's direction.



Diabetes Screening People with undiagnosed diabetes are at risk for heart disease, a heart attack, stroke, and other complications. Yet as many as one-half of the people with diabetes (about 8 million people) are currently undiagnosed. All people age 45 years and older should be tested for diabetes annually.



Risk Factor Management Many deaths from heart disease can be prevented by knowing and managing risk factors that can lead to a heart attack. If you have a family history of heart disease, have high blood pressure, smoke, have high cholesterol, have diabetes, or are overweight, you may be at increased risk for having heart disease or a heart attack. Even though some risk factors, like family history, cannot be changed, you can change many others. Know your risk factors and talk with your health care team at each visit about reducing your risk of heart disease.



Aspirin Therapy Aspirin isn't just for headaches anymore. Studies have shown aspirin may help reduce your risk of having a heart attack. Talk with your doctor about the advantages of taking aspirin to reduce your risk of having a heart attack.



Smoking Cessation Cigarette smoking is the number-one risk factor for heart and blood vessel disease. When you quit smoking, your risk of heart disease goes down. Three years after you quit, your risk of heart disease is almost the same as if you had never smoked. If you smoke, talk with your doctor about ways to help you quit.



Nutrition The American Heart Association recommends a low-cholesterol, low-salt eating plan for people with heart disease. Check with your health care team to see if your current eating plan follows these recommended guidelines to keep your heart healthy.



Flu Vaccine For people who have heart disease, the flu can be much more serious than for people without heart disease. A flu vaccine each year can help you avoid most kinds of flu.

GUIDELINES FOR CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH HEART DISEASE *(continued)*



Pneumonia Vaccine Like the flu, pneumonia can be a serious problem for people with heart disease. Having a pneumonia shot before the age of 65 can lessen your chance of developing pneumonia. If it has been more than five years since you had a pneumonia shot and you are over 65, talk to your doctor about a revaccination.



History and Physical Exam An annual physical exam is important to maintain a healthy heart. Reviewing your recent medical history with your doctor at each visit is critical to staying healthy. Make sure you let your doctor know of any changes in your health or daily routine, including chest discomfort, weight change, swelling in your ankles and feet, and your ability to do daily activities or exercise.

GUIDELINES FOR CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE

People with heart failure should also follow the care guidelines for people with heart disease on the preceding page, in addition to those listed here.



Creatinine If you have heart failure, it is important to closely monitor the health of your kidneys. A serum creatinine blood test can pick up early warning signs of kidney problems. This test can also measure for side effects of certain medicines used to treat heart failure. You should have your serum creatinine checked at least once a year.



Electrolytes To stay in balance, your body needs the right amount of electrolytes such as potassium, sodium and chloride. Too much or too little of any of these can cause your heart to work harder than it needs to. Have your electrolytes checked at least once a year to keep you and your heart in balance.



Liver Function Having heart failure can impact not only your heart but can also affect your liver. Since some medications used to treat heart failure can negatively impact your liver's proper functioning, you should have your liver function tested every six months.



Health Status Assessment Is your health keeping you from doing your daily activities? Have your daily activities had to be changed because of your health? A health status assessment questionnaire, done once a year by a member of your health care team, can help you answer these questions and develop a plan that can help you enjoy your life to the fullest.



Weight Monitoring Daily weight monitoring is a cornerstone in managing fluid buildup that may creep up slowly and cause symptoms that require hospitalization. Monitoring your weight can help catch the fluid buildup early to allow your doctor to treat you before hospitalization is needed.