

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HEART DISEASE



Does having a healthy lifestyle mean that I won't get heart disease?

No, but it lowers your chances. Heredity still plays a role even if you live a healthy lifestyle. If one of your parents or a close blood relative had heart disease at a young age, you could be at risk. Talk to your health care provider about your risk.

Does taking medication to lower cholesterol really prevent heart attacks?

Medicines that lower cholesterol can help prevent a heart attack. These medicines are often used for people at high risk for a heart attack. Often, people who have had a heart attack are given cholesterol-lowering medicines to prevent another one.

Should I drink a glass or two of wine with dinner to prevent heart disease?

We have all heard that drinking red wine helps to prevent a heart attack. This is true for all types of alcohol. Moderate alcohol intake (no more than 1 drink a day for women and 2 drinks a day for men) can decrease the risk of heart disease and heart attacks. One drink equals 12 ounces of beer, 4 ounces of wine, 1½ ounces of 80-proof alcohol or 1 ounce of 100-proof alcohol. Talk with your health care provider for specific guidance.

My cholesterol is high but no one in my family has heart disease. Does this mean that I do not need to worry about my cholesterol?

Not everyone with high cholesterol develops early heart disease. You may want to have your LDL ("bad") and HDL ("good") cholesterol tested. Some people with high cholesterol have normal LDL but high HDL. This is a good situation to be in.

Not having a family history of heart disease is good. But, having high cholesterol puts you at risk for developing heart disease. Watching your diet and regular exercise are good ways of decreasing your risk, plus they are good health habits.

Is it true that just taking one aspirin a day helps to prevent heart attacks?

Aspirin has been shown to help prevent heart attacks in men. Aspirin thins the blood in a way that decreases heart attack risk. Acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) and ibuprofen (e.g., Motrin) do not act in the same way. Aspirin may be a part of your efforts to decrease the risk of developing heart disease.

Talk with your health care provider before starting daily aspirin.