



Cardiovascular Disease



(Heart Disease and Stroke)

The Leading Cause of Death in Texas

CVD has been the leading cause of death in Texas since 1940, and currently accounts for 2 out of every 5 deaths. In 2004 CVD accounted for over 49,922 adult deaths in Texas. Over 40,000 of these deaths were due to ischemic heart disease and over 9,800 were attributed to stroke. These figures equate to an estimated 121,887 years of productive life (before age 65) lost in Texas.

■ What is Cardiovascular Disease?

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) refers to a group of diseases including heart disease, stroke and congestive heart failure. Heart attack and stroke are caused in part by narrowed or blocked arteries resulting in decreased blood supply to the heart and brain. Several changeable and non-changeable factors increase the risk of heart disease and stroke. Non-changeable factors include increasing age, heredity, and male sex.

■ Changeable Risk Factors for Cardiovascular Disease

- **High Blood Pressure** - the consequences associated with high blood pressure are so serious that early detection, treatment, and control are important. High blood pressure is easily detectable and usually controllable with lifestyle modifications such as increasing physical activity or reducing dietary salt intake, with or without medications.
- **High Blood Cholesterol** - cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in your body and is needed for the body to function normally. Your body makes enough cholesterol for its needs. When there is too much cholesterol in your body—because of diet and the rate at which the cholesterol is processed—it is deposited in arteries, including those of the heart, which can lead to narrowing of the arteries and heart disease.
- **Smoking** –smokers generally have a twofold increased risk of heart disease, regardless of whether filtered or non-filtered cigarettes are used. Smoking cessation not only reduces the risk of CVD, but also helps prevent cancer and chronic lung disease.
- **Physical Inactivity** – being physically active helps decrease developing CVD, lowers total cholesterol and increases the good cholesterol (HDL), lowers high blood pressure, reduces the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, and increases longevity.
- **Overweight/Obesity** – people who are overweight are at increased risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis-related disabilities, and some cancers. Healthy food habits help maintain normal blood pressure, desirable blood cholesterol levels, and a healthy body weight.
- **Diabetes** – People with diabetes have the same risk of heart attack as people without diabetes who have already suffered a heart attack.



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■ How to Prevent Cardiovascular Disease

- **Blood Pressure** - Maintain an optimal blood pressure of a systolic blood pressure (upper) less than 120 and a diastolic blood pressure (lower) less than 80.
- **Cholesterol** - Maintain a desirable or optimal level of total cholesterol at less than 200 mg/dL.
- **Smoking** - Don't smoke.
- **Physical Activity** - Be physically active, preferably getting 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per day.
- **Healthy Weight** - Eat a healthy diet, with more fresh fruits and vegetables and less salt and fat.
- **Diabetes** - Early detection, improved delivery of care, and better self-management are key for preventing complications from diabetes.

■ Additional Resources

American Heart Association - <http://americanheart.org>

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute - <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease

Prevention and Health Promotion - <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp>

Texas Council on Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke – <http://www.texascvdcouncil.org>

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