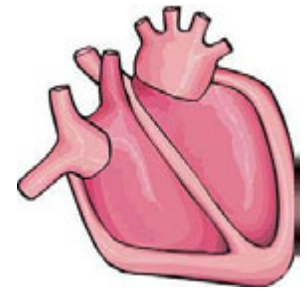


Heart Attack Prevention



What is a Heart Attack?

The medical term for heart attack is myocardial infarction, although it is also called a coronary thrombosis or coronary occlusion. A heart attack occurs when blood supply to part of the heart muscle, the myocardium, is severely reduced or stopped because one or more of the coronary arteries supplying blood to the heart muscle are blocked. This blockage usually is caused by the buildup of plaque in a process called atherosclerosis. The plaque can eventually burst, tear or rupture, creating a “snag” where a blood clot forms, thus blocking the artery.

A heart attack can also occur when a coronary artery temporarily contracts or goes into spasm. It is not known what causes a spasm; it can occur in normal-appearing blood vessels as well as in vessels partly blocked by plaque. When a coronary artery spasms, the artery narrows, decreasing or even stopping the blood flow to part of the heart muscle. A severe spasm can cause a heart attack. If the blood supply is cut off for more than a few minutes, muscle cells suffer permanent injury and die. Depending on the extent of the damage to the heart muscle, this injury can disable or kill an individual. If the heart stops beating, then cardiac arrest has occurred. Often when heart attack survivors speak of the severity of their heart attacks, or how much damage occurred, the reference is to the amount of damage due to the lack of oxygen to the heart muscle.

Arkansas Heart Disease Rates per 100,000 by Ethnic Population Age 35+, 1996-2000

Race or Ethnicity	Population	Heart Disease Death Rate	
		Arkansas	State
Total Population	1,356,227	583	536
American Indian and Alaskan Natives	8,410	141	352
Asian and Pacific Islanders	9,102	341	302
Blacks	170,468	707	662
Hispanics	22,221	163	348
Whites	1,168,247	571	529

Heart Disease Statistics

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and is a major cause of disability. An estimated 79,400,000 American adults have some type of heart disease. That is one in three adults. Of those, almost 700,000 people die of heart disease in the United States every year. That is almost 30% of all deaths in the United States. Heart disease is a term that includes several specific heart conditions with the most common being coronary heart disease—which often appears as a heart attack.

Heart Attack Prevention

It is imperative to prevent the first episode of coronary heart disease because many times the first heart attack is fatal or disabling. To prevent a heart attack, the first steps are up to YOU:

- No Tobacco use—no exposure to tobacco smoke
- Limited Alcohol use—one or fewer standard drinks per day. (A standard drink is any drink that contains about half an ounce of pure alcohol. Generally, this amount of pure alcohol is found in 12-ounces of regular beer, 5-ounces of wine, and/or 1.5-ounces gin, rum, vodka or whiskey.)
- Weight management—achieve and maintain desirable weight (body mass index 18.5-24.9 kg/m²)
- Proper Diet—an overall healthy eating pattern
- Exercise—at least 30 minutes of moderate to high-intensity physical activity on most (preferably all) days of the week

You and your doctor should work together to routinely assess your general risk of cardiovascular disease. New guidelines say that to help prevent the first heart attack, these risk factor assessments should begin as early as age 20. Multiple areas of slight risk can be more important than one area of very high risk for having a heart attack. Based on your risk factor assessment, your doctor may prescribe low-dose aspirin or blood-thinning drugs. Risk factor screens for heart attacks should be performed anywhere from every two to five years and include:

- Blood Pressure (Blood pressure should be maintained below 140/90 mm Hg; or below 130/80 mm Hg for people with Diabetes)
- Body Mass Index (Method of figuring out the degree of excess weight that is based on weight and height)
- Waist Circumference (An unhealthy waist circumference is above 35 inches for women, or above 40 inches for men)
- Pulse Recorded (Pulse rate is your heart rate, or the number of times your heart beats in one minute)
- Cholesterol Profile (Cholesterol lowered to appropriate level based on individual risk)
- Glucose Testing (Normal fasting glucose below 110mg/dL)

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