

# “Handout 7 – What can I do to Prevent Heart Disease & Stroke?”

*The Medicine Cabinet Series*



You can do a lot to prevent heart disease and stroke

- **Keep your blood glucose under control.** You can see if it is under control by having an A1C test at least twice a year. The A1C test tells you your average blood glucose for the past 2 to 3 months. The target for most people is below 7.
- **Keep your blood pressure under control.** Have it checked at every doctor visit. The target for most people is below 130/80.
- **Keep your cholesterol under control.** Have it checked at least once a year. The targets for most people are
  - LDL (bad) cholesterol: below 100
  - HDL (good) cholesterol: above 40 in men and above 50 in women
  - Triglycerides (another type of fat in the blood): below 150
- **Make physical activity a part of your daily routine.** Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week. Check with your doctor to learn what activities are best for you. Take a half-hour walk every day. Or walk for 10 minutes after each meal. Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Park at the far end of the lot.



- **Make sure that the foods you eat are "heart-healthy."** Include foods high in fiber, such as oat bran, oatmeal, whole-grain breads and cereals, fruits, and vegetables. Cut back on foods high in saturated fat or cholesterol, such as meats, butter, dairy products with fat, eggs, shortening, lard, and foods with palm oil or coconut oil.
- **Lose weight if you need to.** If you are overweight, try to exercise most days of the week. See a registered dietitian for help in planning meals and lowering the fat and calorie content of your diet to reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- **If you smoke, quit.** Your doctor can tell you about ways to help you quit smoking.
- **Ask your doctor whether you should take an aspirin every day.** Studies have shown that taking a low dose of aspirin every day can help reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke
- **Take your medicines as directed.**



### **What are the warning signs of a heart attack?**

You may have one or more of the following warning signs (Or, you may have no warning signs at all. Or they may come and go.):

- chest pain or discomfort
- pain or discomfort in your arms, back, jaw, or neck
- indigestion or stomach pain
- shortness of breath
- sweating
- nausea or vomiting
- light-headedness

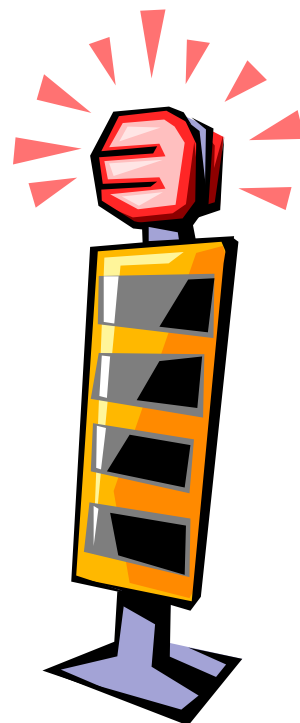
### **What are the warning signs of a stroke?**

A stroke happens when part of your brain is not getting enough blood and stops working.

Depending on the part of the brain that is damaged, a stroke can cause

- sudden weakness or numbness of your face, arm, or leg on one side of your body
- sudden confusion, trouble talking, or trouble understanding
- sudden dizziness, loss of balance, or trouble walking
- sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes or sudden double vision
- sudden severe headache

Sometimes, one or more of these warning signs may happen and then disappear. You might be having a "mini-stroke," also called a TIA (transient ischemic [TRAN-see-unt is-KEE-mik] attack). If you have any of these warning signs, tell your doctor right away.



*Taken from the National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse:  
[http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/complications\\_heart/#4](http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/complications_heart/#4)*

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture, County Governments Cooperating

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its Programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.