

# HAVE A HEART ... STOP A KILLER!



Cardiovascular disease (CVD) - diseases of the heart and blood vessels - is the Number 1 killer of Americans. Nearly 2,500 Americans die of CVD each day ... that's an average of one death every 34 seconds. Many of these deaths, as well as chronic health problems due to CVD, are **preventable**.

Some risk factors such as age, race, sex, and family or personal medical history are uncontrollable. Other risk factors can be eliminated, or at least controlled, through healthy lifestyle choices.

- 👉 **STOP SMOKING:** As the single greatest *preventable* cause of death in the United States, smoking is a major risk factor for CVD, cancer, chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Visit [www.nj.quitnet.com](http://www.nj.quitnet.com) or call toll-free **1-866-NJSTOPS** for stop smoking information. Prohibit smoking in your home or car.
- 👉 **CONTROL HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (hypertension):** Have your blood pressure checked once a year, more frequently if you already know you have hypertension. High blood pressure is a “silent killer”, often occurring without any noticeable symptoms.
- 👉 **STAY ACTIVE:** Regular, moderate aerobic activity helps prevent high blood pressure, increases HDL (good cholesterol) level, lowers triglycerides, and helps control weight.
- 👉 **MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT:** Being overweight increases your chances of having higher cholesterol and triglycerides, lower HDL, and contributes to hypertension and diabetes. Having an “apple” shape (excess weight around the waist, or belly area) seems to increase risk more than the “pear” shape (excess weight around the hips, thighs and buttocks).
- 👉 **DIET** becomes a risk factor for heart disease when it contributes to high blood cholesterol, which is a main cause of atherosclerosis (narrowing of the arteries).
  - 👉 Choose a diet lower in TOTAL fat. Eat less high fat (especially saturated and trans fat) and high cholesterol foods.
  - 👉 Replace part of the saturated fat (from animal products, including whole milk dairy products) with unsaturated fat (oils from plant sources).
  - 👉 Choose more foods high in complex carbohydrates (whole grain products, fruits and vegetables).
  - 👉 Limit your salt (sodium) intake.
- 👉 **TAKE YOUR MEDICATION:** When lifestyle changes aren't enough to lower your risk of CVD, taking blood pressure or cholesterol lowering drugs *as prescribed* (even if you feel healthy) can be an important part of a CVD risk reduction plan.



- 👉 Know the **WARNING SIGNS** of a heart attack:
  - 👉 Pressure, fullness, discomfort or squeezing in the center of your chest. It can last for more than a few minutes *or* can go away and come back.
  - 👉 Pain that goes to your shoulders, neck or arms.
  - 👉 Sweating, discomfort in your chest, and/or feeling lightheaded, faint or short of breath, sick to your stomach, even having back or jaw pain.

**A heart attack is an EMERGENCY: call 911.** By going to the hospital and starting treatment immediately you can reduce your chances of permanent damage and increase your chances of a swift and full recovery. If you can get the victim to a hospital quicker than the rescue squad can respond, drive him/her yourself. If YOU think you are having a heart attack or stroke, call 911 immediately or have someone else drive you to the hospital: DON'T drive yourself.

