
CARDIOVASCULAR SCREENING

Key tests are performed to screen for heart disease and are recommended for optimal heart health. These tests check for not only heart disease but disease of the vascular system (blood vessels) as well.

Major Risk Factors for Heart Disease:

High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)
Diabetes
Family history of heart attacks or stroke
High Cholesterol, LDL or Triglycerides
Current or former smoker
Obesity

Genetic or Natural Major Risk Factors:

- Age: About 80 percent of people who die of coronary heart disease are 65 or older.
- Sex (Gender): Men have a greater risk of heart attack than women do, and they have attacks earlier in life.
- Heredity (Including Race): Children of parents with heart disease are more likely to develop it themselves.

Modifiable Major Risk Factors:

- Smoker: Smokers' risk of developing coronary heart disease is 2-4 times that of nonsmokers.
- High Cholesterol: As LDL rises, so does risk of coronary heart disease.
- High Blood Pressure: High blood pressure increases the heart's workload, causing the arteries to thicken and become stiffer.
- Lack of physical activity: An inactive lifestyle is a risk factor for coronary heart disease.
- Obesity and Overweight: People who have excess body fat are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke.
- Diabetes: Diabetes increases your risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

Other Factors:

- Stress: Individual response to stress may contribute to heart disease.
- Alcohol: If you drink, limit your alcohol consumption to no more than two drinks per day for men and no more than one drink per day for women. Heavy drinking can increase risk of high blood pressure, obesity, stroke and other diseases.
- Diet and Nutrition: A healthy diet is one of the best weapons you have to fight cardiovascular disease

Key Tests for Screening:


At each visit with your doctor, you should have your blood pressure checked and weight and waist circumference measured. Each year, an EKG should be performed and a fasting lipid panel and blood glucose collected. For anyone with multiple risk factors and over the age of 40 for men and 50 for women, additional screening should be performed, such as a CT coronary calcium scoring (CAC score), ankle-brachial index (ABI), stress test, carotid intima-media thickness, echocardiogram if desired, and possibly a nuclear medicine stress test or abdominal aortic aneurysm screening.

Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is one of the most important screenings because high blood pressure usually has no symptoms so it can't be detected without being measured. High blood pressure greatly increases your risk of heart disease and stroke. If your blood pressure is below 120/80 mm Hg, be sure to get it checked at least once every two years, starting at age 20. If your blood pressure is higher, your doctor may want to check it more often. High blood pressure can be controlled through lifestyle changes or medication. After age 65, women have a higher risk of high blood pressure than men, and African-American adults of all ages have a higher-than-average risk.

Weight/BMI/Weight Circumference

Your healthcare provider may ask for your waist circumference or use your body weight to calculate your body mass index (BMI) during your routine visit. These measurements may tell you and your physician whether you're at a healthy body weight and composition. About two of every three adults are now overweight or obese. Being obese puts you at higher risk for health problems such as heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, and more.



Smoking, physical activity, diet

Smoking is the most important preventable cause of premature death in the United States. If you smoke, tell your doctor at your next healthcare visit. If you smoke, your doctor can suggest approaches to help quit. Also discuss your diet and physical activity habits. If there's room for improvement in your diet and daily physical activity levels, ask your doctor to provide helpful suggestions.

Fasting Lipid Panel (Cholesterol, LDL, HDL and Triglycerides)

A fasting lipid panel should be performed every year after the age of 20. This is a blood test that measures total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol and triglycerides. (Learn more about cholesterol and triglyceride levels.) You may need to be tested more frequently if your healthcare provider determines that you're at an increased risk for heart disease or stroke.

Older women tend to have higher triglyceride levels than men. Like high blood pressure, often cholesterol and triglycerides can be controlled through lifestyle changes or medication.

Blood Glucose & HS CRP

Blood glucose level checked at least every three years starting at age 45. High blood glucose levels put you at greater risk of developing insulin resistance, prediabetes and type 2 diabetes. Untreated diabetes can lead to many serious medical problems including heart disease and stroke. If you're overweight AND you have at least one additional cardiovascular risk factor, your doctor may recommend a blood glucose test even if you're not yet 45, or more frequently than every 3 years.

Screening Schedule		
Blood Pressure	Each regular healthcare visit or at least once every 2 years if blood pressure is less than 120/80 mm Hg	Start checking at age 20
Lipid Panel (Cholesterol, HDL, LDL & triglycerides)	Every 4-6 years for normal-risk people; more often if any you have elevated risk for heart disease and stroke	20
Weight/BMI & Waist Circumference	At each healthcare checkup As needed to help evaluate cardiovascular risk. This is a supplemental measurement if your BMI is greater than or equal to 25 kg/m ² .	20
Blood Glucose	If no diabetes present or insulin resistance, check every 3 years	45
Physical Activity & Diet	Each regular healthcare visit	20
Smoking	Each regular healthcare visit	20