



High Blood Pressure



Check Your Healthy Heart

Answer “true” or “false” to the following questions to test your knowledge of heart disease and its risk factors. Be sure to check the answers and explanations on the back of this sheet to see how well you do.

- The risk factors for heart disease that you can do something about are: high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.

T F
- A stroke is often the first symptom of high blood pressure, and a heart attack is often the first symptom of high blood cholesterol.

T F
- A blood pressure greater than or equal to 140/90 mm Hg is generally considered to be high.

T F
- High blood pressure affects the same number of blacks as it does whites.

T F
- The best ways to treat and control high blood pressure are to control your weight, exercise, eat less salt (sodium), restrict your intake of alcohol, and take your high blood pressure medicine if prescribed by your doctor.

T F
- A blood cholesterol of 240 mg/dL is desirable for adults.

T F
- The most effective dietary way to lower the level of your blood cholesterol is to eat foods low in cholesterol.

T F
- Lowering blood cholesterol levels can help people who have already had a heart attack.

T F
- Only children from families at high risk for heart disease need to have their blood cholesterol levels checked.

T F
- Smoking is a major risk factor for four of the five leading causes of death, including heart attack, stroke, cancer, and lung diseases such as emphysema and bronchitis.

T F
- If you have had a heart attack, quitting smoking can help reduce your chances of having a second attack.

T F
- Someone who has smoked for 30 to 40 years probably will not be able to quit smoking.

T F
- The best way to lose weight is to increase physical activity and eat fewer calories.

T F
- Heart disease is the leading killer of men and women in the United States.

T F



Answers

To The Healthy Heart I.Q. Quiz

- 1 True.** High blood pressure, smoking, and high blood cholesterol are the three most important risk factors for heart disease. On the average, each one doubles your chance of developing heart disease. So, a person who has all three of the risk factors is eight times more likely to develop heart disease than someone who has none. Obesity increases the likelihood of developing high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure, which increase your risk of heart disease. Physical inactivity increases your risk of heart attack. Regular exercise and good nutrition are essential to reducing high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and overweight. People who exercise are also more likely to cut down or stop smoking.
- 2 True.** A person with high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol may feel fine and look great; there are often no signs that anything is wrong until a stroke or heart attack occurs. To find out if you have high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol, you should be tested by a doctor, nurse, or other health professional.
- 3 True.** A blood pressure of 140/90 mm Hg or greater is generally classified as high blood pressure. However, blood pressures that fall below 140/90 mm Hg can sometimes be a problem. If the diastolic pressure, the second or lower number, is between 85-89, a person is at an increased risk for heart disease or stroke and should have his/her blood pressure checked at least once a year by a health professional. The higher your blood pressure, the greater your risk for developing heart disease or stroke. Controlling high blood pressure reduces your risk.
- 4 False.** High blood pressure is more common in blacks than whites. It affects 29 out of every 100 black adults compared to 26 out of every 100 white adults. Also, with aging, high blood pressure is generally more severe among blacks than among whites, and therefore causes more strokes, heart disease, and kidney failure.
- 5 True.** Recent studies show that lifestyle changes can help keep blood pressure levels normal even into advanced age, and are important in treating and preventing high blood pressure. Limit high-salt foods, which include many snack items such as potato chips, salted pretzels, and salted crackers; processed foods such as canned soups; and condiments such as ketchup and soy sauce. Also, it is extremely important to take blood pressure medication if prescribed by your doctor, to make sure your blood pressure stays under control.
- 6 False.** A total blood cholesterol of under 200 mg/dL is desirable and usually puts you at a lower risk for heart disease. A blood cholesterol level of 240 mg/dL or above is high and increases your risk of heart disease. If your cholesterol level is high, your doctor will want to check your levels of LDL-cholesterol (“bad” cholesterol) and HDL-cholesterol (“good” cholesterol). A HIGH level of LDL-cholesterol increases your risk for heart disease, as does a LOW level of HDL-cholesterol. A cholesterol level of 200-230 mg/dL is considered borderline-high and usually increases your risk for heart disease. If your cholesterol is borderline-high, you should speak to your doctor to see if additional cholesterol tests are needed. All adults 20 years of age or older should have their blood cholesterol level checked at least once every 5 years.
- 7 False.** Reducing the amount of cholesterol in your diet is important; however, eating



foods low in saturated fat is the most effective dietary way to lower blood cholesterol levels, along with eating less total fat and cholesterol. Choose low-saturated fat foods such as grains, fruits, and vegetables; low-fat or skim milk and milk products; and lean cuts of meat, fish, and chicken. Trim fat from meat before cooking; bake or broil meat rather than fry; use less fat and oil; and take the skin off chicken and turkey. Reducing overweight will also help lower your level of LDL-cholesterol as well as increase your level of HDL-cholesterol.

8 True. People who have had one heart attack are at much higher risk for a second attack. Reducing blood cholesterol levels can greatly slow down (and, in some people, even reverse) the buildup of cholesterol and fat in the walls of the arteries, and significantly reduce the chances of a second heart attack.

9 True. Children from “high risk” families, in which a parent has high blood cholesterol (240 mg/dL or above), or in which a parent or grandparent has had heart disease at an early age (at 55 years or younger), should have their cholesterol levels tested. If a child from such a family has a cholesterol level that is high, it should be lowered under medical supervision, primarily with diet, to reduce the risk of developing heart disease as an adult. For most children, who are not from high-risk families, the best way to reduce the risk of adult heart disease is to follow a low-saturated fat, low cholesterol eating pattern. All children over the age of 2 years and all adults should adopt a heart-healthy eating pattern as a principal way of reducing coronary heart disease.

10 True. Heavy smokers are two to four times more likely to have a heart attack than nonsmokers, and the heart attack death rate among all smokers is 70 percent greater than that of nonsmokers. Older male smokers are also nearly twice as likely to die from stroke than older men who do not smoke, and these odds are nearly as high for older female smokers. Further, the risk of dying from

lung cancer is 22 times higher for male smokers than male nonsmokers and 12 times higher for female smokers than female nonsmokers. Finally, 80 percent of all deaths from emphysema and bronchitis are directly due to smoking.

11 True. One year after quitting, ex-smokers cut their extra risk for heart attack by about half or more, and eventually the risk will return to normal in healthy ex-smokers. Even if you have already had a heart attack, you can reduce your chances of a second attack if you quit smoking. Ex-smokers can also reduce their risk of stroke and cancer, improve blood flow and lung function, and help prevent diseases like emphysema and bronchitis from getting worse.

12 False. Older smokers are more likely to succeed at quitting smoking than younger smokers. Quitting helps relieve smoking-related symptoms like shortness of breath, coughing, and chest pain. Many quit to avoid further health problems and take control of their lives.

13 True. Weight control is a question of balance. You get calories from the foods you eat. You burn off calories by exercising. Cutting down on calories, especially calories from fat, is key to losing weight. Combining this with a regular physical activity, like walking, cycling, jogging, or swimming, can not only help in losing weight but also in maintaining weight loss. A steady weight loss of 1/2 to 1 pound a week is safe for most adults, and the weight is more likely to stay off over the long run. Losing weight, if you are overweight, may also reduce your blood pressure, lower your LDL-cholesterol, and raise your HDL-cholesterol. Being physically active and eating fewer calories will also help you control your weight if you quit smoking.

14 True. Coronary heart disease is the number 1 killer in the United States. Approximately 489,000 Americans died of coronary heart disease in 1990, and approximately half of these deaths were women.





Check Your High Blood Pressure Prevention

Test your knowledge of high blood pressure with the following questions. Circle each true or false. The answers are given on the back of this sheet.



1 There is nothing you can do to prevent high blood pressure.

T F

2 If your mother or father has high blood pressure, you'll get it.

T F

3 Young adults don't get high blood pressure.

T F

4 High blood pressure has no symptoms.

T F

5 Stress causes high blood pressure.

T F

6 High blood pressure is not life-threatening.

T F

7 Blood pressure is high when it's at or over 140/90 mm Hg.

T F

8 If you're overweight, you are two to six times more likely to develop high blood pressure.

T F

9 You have to exercise vigorously every day to improve your blood pressure and heart health.

T F

10 Americans eat two to three times more salt and sodium than they need.

T F

11 Drinking alcohol lowers blood pressure.

T F

12 High blood pressure has no cure.

T F



How well did you do?



Answers

To The High Blood Pressure Prevention I.Q. Quiz

- 1 False.** High blood pressure can be prevented with four steps: 1) keep a healthy weight; 2) become physically active; 3) limit your salt and sodium use; and, 4) if you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.
- 2 False.** You are more likely to get high blood pressure if it runs in your family, but that doesn't mean you must get it. Your chance of getting high blood pressure is also greater if you're older or an African American. But high blood pressure is NOT an inevitable part of aging, and everyone can take steps to prevent the disease—the steps are given in answer 1.
- 3 False.** About 15 percent of those ages 18-39 are among the 50 million Americans with high blood pressure. Once you have high blood pressure, you have it for the rest of your life. So start now to prevent it.
- 4 True.** High blood pressure, or “hypertension,” usually has no symptoms. In fact, it is often called the “silent killer.” You can have high blood pressure and feel fine. That's why it's important to have your blood pressure checked—it's a simple test.
- 5 False.** Stress does make blood pressure go up, but only temporarily. Ups and downs in blood pressure are normal. Run for a bus and your pressure rises; sleep and it drops. Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of arteries. Blood pressure becomes dangerous when it's always high. That harms your heart and blood vessels. So what does cause high blood pressure? In the vast majority of cases, a single cause is never found.
- 6 False.** High blood pressure is the main cause of stroke and a factor in the development of heart disease and kidney failure.
- 7 True.** But even blood pressure slightly under 140/90 mm Hg can increase your risk of heart disease or stroke.
- 8 True.** As weight increases, so does blood pressure. It's important to stay at a healthy weight. If you need to reduce, try to lose 1/2 to 1 pound a week. Choose foods low in fat (especially saturated fat), since fat is high in calories. Even if you're at a good weight, the healthiest way to eat is low fat, low cholesterol.
- 9 False.** Studies show that even a little physical activity helps prevent high blood pressure and strengthens your heart. Even among the overweight, those who are active have lower blood pressures than those who aren't. It's best to do some activity for 30 minutes, most days. Walk, garden, or bowl. If you don't have a 30-minute period, do something for 15 minutes, twice a day. Every bit helps—so make activity part of your daily routine.



10 True. Americans eat way too much salt and sodium. And some people, such as many African Americans, are especially sensitive to salt. Salt is made of sodium and chloride, and it's mostly the sodium that affects blood pressure. Salt is only one form of sodium—there are others. So you need to watch your use of both salt and sodium. That includes what's added to foods at the table and in cooking, and what's already in processed foods and snacks. Americans, especially people with high blood pressure, should eat no more than about 6 grams of salt a day, which equals about 2,400 milligrams of sodium.

11 False. Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure. The “Dietary Guidelines” recommend that for overall health, women should limit their alcohol to no more than one drink a day and men should have no more than two drinks a day. A drink would be 1.5 ounces of 80 proof whiskey, or 5 ounces of wine, or 12 ounces of beer.

12 True. But high blood pressure can be treated and controlled. Treatment usually includes lifestyle changes—losing weight, if overweight; becoming physically active; limiting salt and sodium; and avoiding drinking excess alcohol—and, if needed, medication. But the best way to avoid the dangers of high blood pressure is to prevent the condition.

For more information on high blood pressure



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