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Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team

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## Cardiac Health Fact Sheet

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### Knowledge and prevention are the keys to maintaining your cardiac health

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- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the nation's leading cause of death and disability among men and women of all races and ethnicities.
- CVD includes conditions of the heart and blood vessels. Healthy blood vessels are necessary to carry oxygen-rich blood and other nutrients to the heart, brain, and other vital organs. When vessels are clogged the blood flow to organs can be disrupted. When cardiac vessels are clogged, a myocardial infarction (heart attack) can occur.
- It is possible for CVD to cause a stroke (infarction in the brain) if a piece of plaque breaks off and travels to and blocks a vessel that carries blood to the brain.
- Examples of CVD include arteriosclerosis, myocardial infarction (heart attack), and congestive heart failure.
- The effects of CVD are widespread – that is, felt by the individual, family, and society.
  - About ¼ of all Americans, approximately 57 million people, have CVD.
  - CVD costs the nation about billions of dollars each year in health care costs.

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### What are the Risk Factors for Cardiovascular Disease?

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#### Nonmodifiable Risk Factors

- *Increasing Age*
- *Male Gender* - however, after menopause, women are also at higher risk
- *Race* - higher risk in white vs. black men; black women vs. white women
- *Heredity* – higher risk if CVD is also present in first degree relatives

#### Modifiable Risk Factors

## Cardiac Health Fact Sheet (continued)

- *High Blood Pressure* - leading cause of heart attacks
  - results from narrowing of the blood vessels, so the heart has to work harder to pump blood to all areas of the body
- *High Cholesterol* - increases chance of heart disease too much cholesterol in the blood can build up in the walls of the arteries that feed the heart and brain forming plaques (thick, hard deposits that can clog the arteries)
- *Tobacco Use* –increases heart rate and raises blood pressure
  - risk for heart attack is two times more likely in smokers than in nonsmokers
- *Lack of Physical Activity* - can double one’s risk for heart disease
- *Weight Gain & Obesity* - increases risk of high blood pressure and diabetes
- *Body Type* - “Apple” Shape (fat deposits in abdomen) is associated with higher risk for CVD than “Pear” Shape (fat deposits in hips/thighs)
- *Alcohol* – Excessive amounts can result in high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, and cardiac failure
- *Stress* - When stressed, blood pressure rises, the heart races and muscles tense, resulting in “wear and tear” on the body over time
- *Depression* – Associated with reduced physical activity and exercise, as well as increased smoking and other unhealthy behaviors that add to heart disease risk
- *Anxiety and Panic* - These mood states are associated with high blood pressure, which makes your heart work harder to pump blood throughout the body
- *Social Support* - Loneliness and social isolation are related to a higher death rate in persons with CVD

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### Decrease Risk by Practicing Preventive Behaviors

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*Reduce your blood pressure and cholesterol through diet, exercise, and medication as prescribed by your primary care provider.*

- **Diet** – Add more foods low in cholesterol. Limit salt, fat, and alcohol intake. Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- **Exercise** – At least 30 minutes or more of moderately intense physical activity on most, but preferably all, days of the week. Three 10-minute sessions of exercise each day are just as effective.
- **Quit Smoking** – Talk to your provider about how to quit and stay tobacco-free.
- **Stress Management** – Programs are available to help you learn ways to reduce mental and physical stress (e.g., relaxation training).

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### For More Information

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**Contact your primary care provider if you have questions about your cardiac health.**

## **Cardiac Health Fact Sheet (continued)**

**If you would like more information on stress management and heart healthy strategies, contact your behavioral health provider in primary care.**