

Coronary Artery Disease

What Can Be Done to Prevent Coronary Artery Disease and Its Complications?

Many steps can be taken to avoid, or at least greatly delay, the harmful consequences of heart disease. The most important ones that are within one's control include changes in lifestyle:

- **Stop smoking.** Smoking contributes to the build-up of plaque, which leads to coronary artery disease and heart attacks. While quitting smoking can be a struggle, the benefits of stopping are significant. Quitting at any age greatly improves health and reduces the risk of coronary artery disease.
- **Monitor what you eat.** Knowing how to read food labels is vital to understanding what one is eating. Recognizing that there are different types of fat and avoiding or limiting items high in saturated fat can help improve your cholesterol.
- **Exercise more often.** You do not have to join a gym or embark on a rigorous exercise program, but it is important to exercise regularly. Walking for 20 – 30 minutes a day is optimal. It is always advisable to discuss with your physician how much exercise is appropriate and if you qualify for formal exercise programs that are often disease-specific (e.g., cardiac rehabilitation).
- **Lose weight.** If you are overweight, lose weight by participating in a safe, gradual weight reduction program. Maintaining a healthy, stable weight is then accomplished by continuing those healthy lifestyle changes.
- **Have regular check-ups.** Many of the conditions that can lead to coronary artery disease, such as diabetes, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia, develop without any signs or symptoms. Therefore, regular check-ups can screen for elevated blood pressure, and blood work can be evaluated for glucose and cholesterol levels. Your health care provider can interpret these results and, if necessary, work with you to develop the treatment plan that will be best for you.