

A publication of the Pinellas County Health Department

## February is American Heart Month

### Are You at Risk for Heart Attack or Stroke?

You can reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke. Start by becoming aware of your **risk factors** -



personal traits and habits that may increase your risk. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chances of having a heart attack or stroke.

**AGE** - The older you get, the more likely you are to have a heart attack or stroke.

**SEX (Gender)** - Men have a greater risk of heart attack than women. In most age groups,

more men than women will have a stroke in a given year. At all ages, however, *more women than men die of stroke.*

**HEREDITY AND RACE** - Your risk of heart attack or stroke is greater if close members of your family have had either of these. African Americans have a greater risk of heart disease and stroke than Caucasians do.

**HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE** - It's called the "silent killer" because it usually has no symptoms, yet contributes to many heart attacks and strokes. It makes your heart work harder than normal - making the heart and arteries more prone to injury. High blood pressure is defined as 140/90 mm Hg or greater that stay high over time.

**TOBACCO SMOKE** - People who smoke cigarettes or cigars have a much higher risk of heart attack or stroke. And being constantly exposed to other people's tobacco smoke (secondhand smoke) increases your risk - even if *you* don't smoke.

**HIGH BLOOD CHOLESTEROL** - Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like substance in your body. High cholesterol (240 mg/dL or higher) is a major risk for heart attack and stroke. If you have high levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol, it can lower your risk of heart disease and stroke.

**PHYSICAL INACTIVITY** - Regular physical activity helps reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke. You can gain health benefits from doing moderate-intensity

physical activity for 30 minutes or more a day on most days.

**OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY** - If you have too much fat, especially in the waist, then you're at higher risk for health problems, including heart disease and stroke. A *high-risk waistline* for women is more than 35 inches; for men it's more than 40 inches. **Obesity** is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 30.0 or more (about 30 or more lbs. overweight). **Overweight** is defined as a BMI of 25 - 29.9. To learn your BMI, multiply your weight (pounds) by 705, divide by your height (in inches), then divide *again* by your height.

**DIABETES** - Having diabetes increases your risk of heart disease and stroke. Many individuals with diabetes also have high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and are overweight. All these problems increase the risk even more.

**Previous Heart Attack, Stroke or TIA** - If you've already had a heart attack, you're at higher risk of having a second attack or stroke. If you've had a stroke, you're at much greater risk of having another one or having a heart attack. A transient ischemic attack (TIA) is also a strong risk factor for stroke.

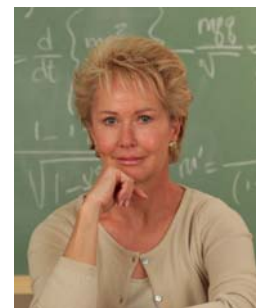
**CERTAIN BLOOD DISORDERS** - A **high red blood cell count** makes blood clots more likely, increasing the risk of stroke. **Sickle cell anemia** is a genetic disorder that

mainly affects African Americans. "Sickled" red blood cells are less able to carry oxygen to the body. They also tend to stick to blood vessel walls, which can block arteries to the brain and cause a stroke.

**WHAT TO DO?** You can't control some of these risk factors, but some you can. Work with your healthcare provider to reduce, prevent or control as many risk factors as you can. **You'll be glad you did...**and your loved ones will be, too.

**VISIT:**

[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)



## February is Children's Dental Health Month

Water fluoridation, fluoridated toothpaste, improved oral hygiene and increased dental visits have resulted in fewer cavities in children.

However, the chronic infectious disease that causes cavities remains second only to the common cold in children. That's why it is important that young children see a dentist - so that tooth decay can be prevented or treated while it is in the earliest stages.

The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends that children see a dentist no later than their first birthday, yet only three out of five children have



seen a dentist before kindergarten. As a result, more than half children under age eight have tooth decay. And unlike a cold, tooth decay does not go away; it only gets worse. Pain from untreated dental disease makes it difficult for children to eat, sleep and pay attention in school. It also affects their self-esteem.

Parents should teach children the importance of oral hygiene at an early age, so when they grow up they will continue with good habits that will contribute to their overall health.

### Cavity Prevention Tips From the American Dental Association

#### For Babies, Toddlers and Pre-Schoolers:

- ◆ After each feeding, clean the baby's gums with a clean wet gauze pad or washcloth.
- ◆ When teeth start to appear, brush them with a child's size toothbrush and plain water. Look for toothbrushes that carry the ADA Seal of Acceptance. They have been evaluated by the ADA for safety and effectiveness.



- ◆ Begin flossing when at least two teeth begin to touch.
- ◆ Start dental visits by the child's first birthday. Make visits regularly. If you think your child has dental problems, take the child to the dentist as soon as possible.
- ◆ Brush teeth of children over age two with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste and make sure to floss daily. Look for toothpastes that carry the ADA Seal of Acceptance. They have been evaluated by the ADA for safety and effectiveness.
- ◆ Children should be supervised while brushing to keep them from swallowing the toothpaste.

#### For School-Age Children and Adolescents:

- ◆ Until they are six or seven years old, continue to brush your children's teeth twice a day with a child's size toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Continue to assist with flossing as needed.
- ◆ By age six or seven, children should be able to brush their own teeth twice a day but often require supervision until about age 10 or 11, to make sure they are doing a thorough job.
- ◆ Visit the dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral exams.
- ◆ Ask the dentist about dental sealants, a protective plastic coating that can be applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth where decay often starts.
- ◆ Remind adolescents about practicing good oral hygiene and the importance of regular dental check ups .



The Pinellas County Health Department's Dental Health Division offers dental services for children up to the age of 18.

Services include:

Oral Hygiene	Restorations
Cleanings	Extractions
Fluoride Treatment.	Minor Orthodontic
Dental Sealants	Cancer Screenings
School Presentations	Tooth Decay Prevention Education

For more information, call (727) 824-6975

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