

7 Questions for your doctor

It seems that everyday there is a new fact or article about the risks of heart disease. We see it in the news, on the internet and, most recently, on packages that cover our food. But with all of this data it can sometimes be difficult to wade through the facts and realities of heart disease at it relates, specifically, to you.

A good way to sift through the mountain of information is have a proper sit down with your doctor to ask a few heart hitting questions. Print this form for your next visit.

1. What are my numbers?

Knowing your blood pressure and cholesterol levels is crucial to your heart health. The higher your cholesterol and blood pressure levels, the more you are at risk for coronary heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, heart attacks, blood clots and clogged arteries. Many people walk around without the slightest idea of their blood pressure and cholesterol levels because, for the most part, there are no symptoms. Find out your numbers on your next visit to the doctor!

BP _____ Blood Sugar _____ BMI _____

2. Can stress put a strain on my heart?

Stress is a major player in your overall health, especially your heart. Studies have shown that too much stress can result in increasing your blood pressure, heart rate and can even increase your risk of stroke. If stress is becoming a bit of a bother in your life, discuss with your doctor ways to alleviate it. Exercise, healthy eating and meditation are some awesome options.

3. Am I at a healthy weight?

Your weight can have a direct affect on the health of your heart. In fact, excess body fat can increase your risk for heart disease, stroke and diabetes even if it only measures to an extra 20 pounds. Knowing your optimal body weight is a sure step in the right direction to lowering your risk of heart disease.

Current weight _____ Where should I be? _____

4. Am I exercising enough?

It's a common thought that exercise is only really good for weight management and, while that may be true, it's also an awesome treat for your wellbeing! Exercise is perfect for the heart and lungs, it can help to reduce the risks of several diseases including cardiovascular and diabetes, not to mention the effects it can have on relieving stress and tension, and it's a great boost for you self-esteem. Most physicians suggest exercising for about 30 minutes everyday.

Max time: _____ **How many days per week** _____

5. Can I be referred to a nutritionist?

Aside from being crucial to our existence, food has benefits for your heart that far exceed basic nutrition. The key is knowing what *kinds* of food help your heart. Healthy eating can assist in the prevention of high cholesterol, high blood pressure as well as help to reduce the risk factors for heart attack and stroke. If you're unsure about what food might work well for your heart health needs, checking in with a nutritionist for some healthful tips will help give you direction.

Name of Nutritionist: _____

Contact Details: _____

6. How does smoking affect my heart?

It's almost common knowledge that smoking is particularly bad for your health. Smoking as it relates to your heart is even worse; smokers are as much as four times more likely to develop coronary heart disease and stroke than non-smokers – this includes cigars as well. If you are a smoker, here's a bit of encouragement, when you quit smoking your risk for heart disease and stroke begins to drop almost immediately and will continue drop as the months go by. Your doctor can help illustrate the effects your smoking has on heart by doing various coronary imaging tests.

Don't forget: Second-hand smoke can be just as bad for your health and heart!

7. How does birth control or ED medication affect my heart?

For some people, the use of hormonal birth control or erectile dysfunction medication can have a serious affect on their heart health. This risk is heightened when coupled with other elements such as smoking, or obesity. Check with your doctor about the kind of birth control your taking and how it affects your heart.