

African-Americans and Heart Disease

African-Americans are at greater risk of dying from heart disease than whites in Missouri.

African-Americans are also more likely to die from stroke at a younger age. Many African-Americans who die from stroke die before age 65.¹

Risk factors

Many of the risk factors for heart disease are more common in African-Americans than whites. Risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, overweight or obese, unhealthy diet and lack of physical activity.

Salt-sensitivity, a risk factor for high blood pressure, is more marked in African-Americans. A majority of African-Americans do not eat a healthy diet, including fruits and vegetables, and are overweight or obese.

Determine your risk by utilizing the American Heart Association risk calculator at:

https://www.heart.org/gglRisk/main_en_US.html.

Reducing the risk

There are a number of things you can do to help reduce your risk of developing heart disease:

- Monitor blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Take medications as prescribed.
- See a health care provider for regular check-ups.
- Quit smoking.
- Be physically active for 30 minutes or more on most days of the week.
- Eat a healthy diet to maintain a healthy weight.

More information can be found at:
health.mo.gov/heartdisease



Warning signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, while others start slowly with mild pain or discomfort. Many times, people aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting medical attention. The warning signs of a heart attack include:

- Chest discomfort (angina) – including pain, squeezing, tightness or pressure in the center of the chest – that lasts more than a few minutes or that goes away and returns
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body – one or both arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath – before or during chest discomfort
- Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, lightheadedness or weakness

If you experience chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the other warning signs, call 911 immediately.

Data Source: 1. Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Missouri Information for Community Assessment, Death, 2011



Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
Bureau of Cancer and Chronic Disease Control
health.mo.gov/heartdisease

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