



Heart Disease and Family Health History



What is Heart Disease?

Heart disease is any condition that affects how the heart works. Heart attacks, angina and clogged arteries are all forms of heart disease. Other important conditions causing heart disease are high blood pressure and diabetes. Heart disease is the number one cause of death in Michigan and the country. Even though heart disease is one of the most **preventable** chronic diseases, about 71 people in Michigan die of heart disease every day. Many factors, including genes, behavior and lifestyle affect the way your heart works.

Why is Family History Important?

Heart disease tends to run in families. Some kinds of heart disease are inherited and can be passed from parent to child.

Look for these "red flags" in your family:

- ♥ A heart attack or stroke before the age of 55 in a man or 65 in a woman
- ♥ High cholesterol
- ♥ High blood pressure
- ♥ Sudden unexplained death
- ♥ Diabetes
- ♥ Bypass surgery or stent



What Can You Do?

KNOW your family history. Talk to your relatives and find out if anyone has had signs of heart disease. Even though you can't change your family history, there are steps you can take that may prevent or delay the onset of disease.

If you have a family history of heart disease:

- ♥ Tell your health care provider
- ♥ Ask if you would benefit from a formal risk assessment and/or genetic counseling
- ♥ Ask what screenings are recommended, then be sure to get them done
- ♥ Know your cholesterol level
- ♥ Have your blood pressure checked regularly
- ♥ Get more physical activity
- ♥ Be tobacco free
- ♥ Take prescribed medications
- ♥ Have regular doctor visits

Heart disease can't always be prevented, but if detected early there are many new and effective treatments. **If you have been diagnosed with heart disease**, share your health history with family members. Encourage them to follow through with recommended screenings and make healthy lifestyle choices to reduce their risk of heart disease.

For More Information



American Heart Association
www.Americanheart.org

Michigan's Genetics Resources Center
www.MIGeneticsConnection.org

Michigan Department of Community Health
Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity
www.michigan.gov/cvh