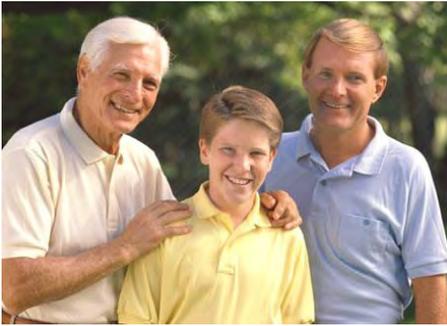




## RISK FACTORS YOU CANNOT CONTROL

### ■ HOW AGE AFFECTS YOUR HEALTH



With age comes wisdom. But sometimes age can also bring physical limitations and health conditions. The age-related changes that may affect your heart and blood vessels include:

- Your heart pumps less efficiently, so it has to work harder to pump the same amount of blood to the body. This can raise your risk of heart failure.
- Your blood vessels become more rigid and less elastic which can lead to high blood pressure.
- Arteries can become blocked by plaque which can put you at greater risk for heart attack or stroke.

The risk of heart and blood vessel disease generally increases with age. This is especially true for women. At menopause, the risk of heart disease and stroke begins to rise, and it keeps rising. In part, it is because a woman's body stops making the hormone estrogen. If menopause is caused by surgery to remove the uterus and ovaries, the risk of heart disease and stroke rises more sharply. The risk rises more slowly when menopause occurs naturally. Some women consider hormone replacement therapy (HRT) during or after menopause. Your doctor can explain the benefits and potential risks associated with HRT.

### ■ HOW GENDER AFFECTS YOUR HEALTH

All other things being equal, men and women have similar chances of developing heart or blood vessel disease. But men and women are likely to develop heart or blood vessel disease at different ages, and there are different survival rates.

Stroke is more common in men, but more women die from strokes.

Men younger than age 55 have a greater risk of high blood pressure than women of the same age. At age 55, men's and women's risks are similar. At age 75 and older, women are more likely to develop high blood pressure than men are.

More men have heart attacks at a younger age. Women are generally about 10 years older than men when they have heart attacks. But heart disease is the #1 killer of both men and women in the United States.

### ■ HOW HEREDITY AFFECTS YOUR HEALTH

**Heredity can affect the following conditions:**

**High cholesterol** - Some families have a genetic condition that raises blood cholesterol or triglycerides. High levels of either can increase your risk of heart attack or stroke.

**High blood pressure and diabetes** - High blood pressure and diabetes can run in families and can increase your chance of developing heart and blood vessel disease.

**Heart attack** - If your brother, father, or grandfather had a heart attack before age 55 - or your sister, mother, or grandmother had one before age 65, you may be at risk, too.