



## Keeping Heart Attack In Check

By Janet Lee, Nurse Clinician, Cardiac Department, NUH

Heart attack (or Coronary Artery Heart Disease) occurs when blood supply to the heart is critically reduced or completely blocked by fatty deposits. In Singapore, this condition is the second most common cause of death accounting for about 20% of all deaths.

If not treated promptly, heart attacks will gradually wear out the affected heart tissue. Thus, it is important to watch out for and reduce your cardiovascular risk factors.



### So, Are You At Risk Of Having A Heart Attack?

Here's a checklist on cardiovascular risk factors to help you determine if you are at risk of having a heart attack. Do take some time to go through the checklist carefully. If your answer is "Yes" to most of the questions, it indicates that you will have a higher risk of having a heart attack.

#### ■ Do you have high blood cholesterol?

A total blood cholesterol reading below 5.2mmol/L is desirable. The higher the value, the greater the risk.

#### ■ Do you have high blood pressure?

Diabetics are 2 to 3 times more likely to have heart attacks if their blood sugar is not kept under control.

#### ■ Do you smoke?

Smokers are 3 times more likely to suffer a heart attack. The poisons in the cigarette smoke will damage the arteries, speed the build up of fatty deposits in the heart artery and deprive the heart of oxygen.

#### ■ Do you lead a sedentary lifestyle?

When your heart is unfit, you are twice as likely to develop heart attack compared to a healthy, fit person.

#### ■ Are you overweight?

People who are overweight by 20% or more are 3 times more likely to suffer a heart attack than those with a healthy weight.

#### ■ Do you often feel stressed and tensed?

Prolonged stress is a known risk factor contributing to heart attacks.

#### ■ Is there a history of heart disease in your family?

You have a higher risk of heart attack if any of your family members have a history of Coronary Artery Heart Disease.

#### ■ Are you male and above 40 years of age?

Older people are at greater risk of having heart attacks. Men are also more likely to suffer from heart attacks than women.

### How Can You Reduce Your Risk of Heart Attack?

Your life is in your hands. Reduce your chances of having a heart attack by adopting a healthy lifestyle.

#### Watch your diet

Don't overeat. Cut down on fats, cholesterol and sugar. Eat balanced meals, with lots of fruits and vegetables. Shed the extra fat through proper diet and exercise.

#### Quit smoking

Stop smoking now. Do not feel embarrassed to seek professional help to quit smoking.

#### Be more active

Exercise regularly, at least 3 times a week, with each session lasting at least half an hour. Brisk walking is a good form of exercise - it's easy and free!

#### Keep blood pressure, blood sugar and diabetes under control

If you already have high blood pressure or diabetes, remember to go for your regular check-ups and take your medication regularly, as instructed by your doctor.

#### Manage stress

Find ways to cope with stress in your life. Pick up a hobby or exercise to relieve daily tension.

Don't put yourself at risk. Reduce your risk factors - remember, prevention is better than cure. Make it a point to go for annual checks for your blood pressure, blood sugar and blood cholesterol. Through these regular health screenings, treatment can be rendered early if abnormal results are detected, thus helping you to reduce the risk of having a heart attack.