RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE

Some things about our bodies were passed on to us by our parents through genetics. We can’t change these things. Having a family member with certain health problems caused by genetics can increase your risk for having them too. But making healthy choices can reduce your chances of developing some diseases.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) — People whose blood pressure is above a normal range are said to have high blood pressure, or hypertension. This causes the heart to pump harder than normal to push blood through the body. High blood pressure has no warning signals, so everyone should have their blood pressure checked regularly. High blood pressure can be reduced by increasing physical activity, making healthy food choices and staying at a healthy weight.

HIGH CHOLESTEROL — Too much cholesterol in the blood raises the risk for heart disease. Some cholesterol comes from the food we eat. By eating foods low in fat and cholesterol, we can reduce the amount of bad cholesterol in our bodies.

SMOKING — Cigarettes are very bad for your health. Smoking can cause cancer, lung disease and heart disease. Over time, cigarette smoke destroys your lungs and blood vessels, making it hard for blood to deliver oxygen and nutrients to your organs.

PHYSICAL INACTIVITY — Not getting enough regular physical activity is bad for the heart. Your heart muscle needs to work out to stay in shape, so be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day. Not getting enough regular physical activity is linked to high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes and being overweight.

OBESITY AND OVERWEIGHT — Being overweight isn’t about how you look outside. It can lead to serious problems inside like high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes. Eat right and be physically active to maintain a healthy weight.

DIABETES — Insulin is a hormone that helps the body use sugar. Diabetes is a disease that develops when your body either doesn’t make enough insulin or can’t use it to efficiently process the sugar you eat. This makes your blood sugar levels too high. Sometimes diabetes can be managed with diet and physical activity. Other times, prescription medicine is required to control the blood sugar level.