

Heart Health

Because anyone can be affected by heart disease, it is good to know where you stand; after all it does work for you 24/7. How is your heart health? It is important to look at a variety of factors, and not least of all, check with your *dentist* on a regular basis. Oral health and heart health are inextricably related. Below are some things to consider.

Total Cholesterol: Do you know your numbers? Some experts want your total cholesterol to be below 200 mg/dL. They want the HDL (good cholesterol) to be above 60mg/dL and LDL (bad one) to be less than 100mg/dL. Triglycerides are another of the lipids that you want to monitor. 150mg/dL or less is best. *It is important to talk to your doctor.* Ask about these numbers.

Blood Pressure: 120/80 used to be perfect. Now many experts believe that you should aim for 100/70. *Talk to your doctor.* You can find out what's right for you according to your physician and your particular situation.

Weight: Body Mass Index (BMI) figures in here. Do you know where yours should be and what yours is? *Talk to your doctor.*

C - reactive protein (CRP): Aim for 1.0 say some. This is a marker of inflammation in the blood. *Talk to your doctor* about what number he/she thinks is right for you.

Urinalysis: If this is abnormal it could mean added risk factors that add up to heart and/or kidney problems.

Depression: Reportedly, left untreated, depression doubles the risk of heart attack. You may or may not even realize that you are depressed. You can *ask your doctor* for a quick test initially to help sort this out.

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, if a person has any one risk factor, that doubles your chances of heart disease. Certain risk factors such as age cannot be changed, but the good news is that if you eat right, exercise, don't smoke, and keep a healthy weight, you can considerably reduce your chances of cardiovascular disease. A family history of heart disease is a leading risk factor. Be aware of your family history and share this information with your doctor. You also can ask your doctor for recommendations of websites and books about heart health. It is sad to see, but it used to be that only people in their 50s and 60s developed blockages in their vessels. Now atherosclerosis is seen in people who are in their 20s and 30s! Eating better and getting more exercise helps. Here's one little tip: *replace soda with water.* Sometimes a few small changes can add up to big differences. Doing something is better than doing nothing. If you need help creating an eating plan or a workout routine, talk to your physician and/or go to www.NHLBI.nih.gov and search for atherosclerosis. This site has much useful information.