

Focusing on your health to lower your risk of heart disease



If your parents and grandparents had heart disease, you might assume that family history means you're destined for the same diagnosis. Although your genes do play a role in your risk of developing heart disease, there are steps you can take to lower your risk. The first step is to talk with your primary care physician to put together a plan that addresses the particular risk factors you face.

Proactive steps to lower your risk of heart disease also include:

Heart disease is the **leading cause of death** for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the United States.¹

Knowing your family history

To build a prevention plan that takes into consideration your specific heart disease risk factors, you need to know your family history.



Getting screened

If you have a family history of heart disease, ask your doctor when you should begin regular blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol screenings. Many doctors recommend people at higher risk start these annual screenings at 18 so that if the numbers increase, treatment and lifestyle changes can be started sooner rather than later.



Making healthier lifestyle choices

A study that included more than 55,000 people found for people at an increased genetic risk for heart disease, four lifestyle choices could significantly decrease the risk.² Those choices included:



- Not smoking
- Maintaining a body mass index (BMI) of less than 30
- Exercising at least once a week
- Eating a healthier diet

Being aware of the symptoms of heart disease



While the early stages of heart disease often have no symptoms, there are symptoms that could mean that you have a problem with your heart. Tell your doctor if you have:

- Chest pain or shortness of breath while walking, climbing stairs, or exercising
- Palpitations (irregular heartbeats)
- Faster or slower than normal heartbeat
- Pain, numbness, or coldness in your legs or arms, which could mean the blood vessels are narrowed
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Fainting
- Fatigue
- Swelling in the legs, ankles, feet, or abdomen

The PinnacleCare team of care advisors can help support you through your heart health journey. They will work with you to answer any questions and help you understand your risk factors, and if needed:

- ✓ Facilitate and schedule appointments with leading specialists
- ✓ Collect and forward your medical records
- ✓ Facilitate an expert second opinion for a diagnosis
- ✓ Find a local primary care physician accepting new patients and takes your insurance.



Contact us by phone at **888-442-7380** or online at **www.PinnacleCare.com/cityofmarlborough**.
Representatives are available Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. (ET)

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>

2. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1605086#t=article>

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