



Facts About Heart Disease and Stroke:

Heart disease and stroke, also known as cardiovascular disease (CVD), are the nation's leading killers among both men and women, and affect all racial and ethnic groups.

Coronary heart disease and stroke, the two most common forms of CVD, together account for more deaths in every Ohio county than any other cause of death, including cancer.

Know Your Family History—It's Important to Your Health!

Family members share their genes, environment, habits and lifestyles. Traits such as eye color and height run in families, and risk for diseases such as heart disease and stroke can also run in families. Even though you cannot change your family history or your genetic makeup, knowing your family history can help you reduce your risk of developing heart disease or stroke. People with a family history of heart disease and stroke may have the most to gain from screening tests and lifestyle changes.

Learning About Your Family History

- Gather information on your immediate family-- parents, brothers and sisters and children.
- Learn about your extended family-- grandparents, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews and half brothers and half sisters.
- Gather family heart-health risk factor information. Include conditions such as:

High blood pressure (hypertension)

Smoking

Overweight or obesity

High cholesterol

Diabetes



What heart or cardiovascular conditions have been diagnosed in family members? And how old were they when they were diagnosed?

Examples include:

Aneurysm

Coronary heart disease

Stroke

Heart muscle disease (cardiomyopathy)

Congestive heart failure

Heart attack (myocardial infarction)

Irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia)



Turning Information into Action

Talk to your doctor about your family health history and together look for red flags that might indicate the need for a prevention plan or preventive screenings. If you and your doctor notice a pattern of disease in your family, it might be a sign of a hereditary form of CVD running through the generations of your family. Your doctor may refer you to a specialist, such as a doctor trained specifically in genetics and/or a genetic counselor. These specialists can help you determine if you and your family members are at risk for an inherited form of CVD. Even with inherited forms of these diseases, steps can be taken to reduce your risk.

Examples of Red Flags in Your Family Health History*

- Heart disease at a young age in one or more close relatives (male before age 55 or female before age 65).
- Stroke before age 65 in a close relative.
- Sudden cardiac death in a relative who seemed healthy.
- Heart disease in both your mother and father.
- Two or more close relatives on the same side of the family with the same or related conditions (heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure).
- A relative who has been diagnosed with a specific type of hereditary heart disease (many types of heart muscle diseases and irregular heart beats are hereditary).

*This is not a complete list. Additional red flags exist and can be explored with your doctor or genetic counselor.

Action Steps You Can Take

In addition to talking to your doctor about your family health history, there are some additional things everyone can do to reduce their risk of heart disease and stroke:

- If you smoke, quit. If you don't smoke, don't start.
- Eat a balanced diet low in sodium and high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products and lean meats.
- Get active.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- If you drink alcohol, limit intake to one to two drinks a day.
- Manage your stress levels.
- Take your medications to control high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes.



By understanding your genetic risk factors for heart disease and stroke, you and your doctor can take preventive measures that may save your life - and the lives of your loved ones.



For more information

Ohio Cardiovascular Genetics Risk Assessment Services

Akron

- Regional Comprehensive Genetics Center at Akron Children's Hospital: **330-543-8792**

Cincinnati

- Regional Comprehensive Genetics Center at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center: **513-636-4760**
- The Heart Institute at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center: **513-636-4432**

Cleveland

- Regional Comprehensive Genetics Center at MetroHealth Medical Center: **216-778-4323**
- Regional Comprehensive Genetics Center at University Hospital Center for Human Genetics: **216-844-3936**

Columbus

- Regional Comprehensive Genetics Center, CardioGenetics Clinic at Children's Hospital: **614-355-3497**
- The Ohio State University Medical Center: High Risk Family Heart Clinic, Richard M. Ross Heart Hospital: **614-293-6638** & Medical Genetics Clinic: **614-293-6694** or **1-888-329-1654**

Dayton

- Regional Comprehensive Genetics Center at Children's Medical Center: **937-641-3800**

Toledo

- Regional Comprehensive Genetics Center at St. Vincent's University of Toledo: **419-251-8012**

Youngstown

- Regional Genetics Center at Forum Health: **330-884-3106**

Online Resources

U.S. Surgeon General's Family History Initiative

<http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Family History Web site for the Public

<http://www.cdc.gov/genomics/activities/famhx>

National Society for Genetic Counselors

<http://www.nsgc.org/consumer/familytree>

Ohio Department of Health, Genetics Program

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/cmh/genserv/genserv1.aspx>

Ohio Department of Health, Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention Program

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/hprp/cardio/hdsp.aspx>

Ohio State University Medical Center, The Richard M. Ross Heart Hospital <http://www.medicalcenter.osu.edu/patient-care/hospitalsandservices/hospitals/rossheart>

