



BE STRONG-HEARTED

1. True/False: Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women.

TRUE. About 610,000 people die of heart disease every year, according to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That's one in every four deaths.

2. True/False: Heart attacks and strokes kill more women each year than the next four causes of death combined, including cancer.

TRUE. Heart disease is the leading cause of death among women in the United States. Many women consider heart disease to be a "man's disease," when in fact, it kills almost the same number of men and women.

3. True/False: Heart disease cannot be reversed.

FALSE. Making dietary changes, quitting smoking, exercising and controlling blood pressure and cholesterol can help reverse plaque buildup in the arteries.

4. True/False: Women receive some protection against heart disease from estrogen in their pre-menopausal years, but after that their risk increases dramatically.

TRUE. Estrogen reduces the risk of a heart attack. However, once estrogen levels begin to wane after menopause, women have the same heart attack risk as men.

5. True/False: Anyone, including children, can develop heart disease.

TRUE. Some people are born with heart disease; however, most people develop it later in life – usually after decades of unhealthy lifestyle behaviors. If you have genetic predisposition for heart disease, you can develop it at any age.

6. True/False: More than half of all preventable heart disease and stroke deaths happen to people under age 65.

TRUE. A report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention attributed 80 percent of deaths from coronary artery disease (a condition that causes heart attacks and strokes) to behaviors such as a sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy diet, tobacco use, heavy alcohol use and obesity.

7. True/False: Race and ethnicity affect a person's risk of suffering a heart attack or stroke and their chances of survival.

TRUE. Race and ethnic background play a significant role in cardiovascular disease mortality. According to the CDC, African Americans are twice as likely to die from a heart attack or stroke compared to white and European Americans. The CDC also found that the heart disease death rate was 20 percent higher and stroke death rate 14 percent higher among American Indians/Alaska Natives than all other races. And the average age for a stroke among Hispanics was 67 compared to 80 for non-Hispanic whites, according to the Northern Manhattan Stroke Study.

8. A heart attack happens when:

- A. LDL or "bad" cholesterol gets too high.
- B. A blood clot forms over a plaque lesion.
- C. HDL or "good" cholesterol stops clearing the arteries.
- D. Cholesterol builds up in the blood and clogs an artery.

Heart attacks are complex events, but they occur when a blood clot forms over a plaque lesion. Plaque, which is made up of fat, cholesterol, calcium, and other substances found in the blood, builds up inside the arteries. This is called atherosclerosis. Inflammation plays an important role in the development of atherosclerosis. Your immune system thinks the plaque is foreign and initiates a response to wall the plaque off from the blood. If that wall breaks down, the plaque may rupture. That rupture can lead to a clot, which may block the blood flow. When the blood flow is stopped, it can result in a heart attack or stroke.

Heart Attack IQ Answer Key

9. True/False: Your heart stops beating when a heart attack strikes.

FALSE. A heart attack is the sudden blockage of a coronary artery (blood vessel supplying blood to the heart), which stops the blood to the heart and damages it. But your heart can continue beating while this is occurring. When you're heart stops beating, that's called cardiac arrest.

10. True/False: People can have warning signs and symptoms of a heart attack for days or weeks in advance.

TRUE. The onset and intensity of heart attack signs and symptoms varies from person to person. You may suddenly feel intense pain and pressure in the chest, shoulder or jaw. Or experience mild chest pain, nausea/indigestion, fatigue and shortness of breath for hours, days or weeks. Some people have heart attacks without symptoms (also known as a silent heart attack), while for others, cardiac arrest may be the first sign of coronary artery disease.

11. True/False: Men have a lower chance of surviving first heart attacks than women.

FALSE. Women have a lower survival rate, according to Harvard Health. On average, men tend to have their first heart attack at younger ages than women — age 65 versus 72. Within five years of having the heart attack, 64 percent of men are still alive, where only 53 percent of women are.

12. True/False: It's dangerous to exercise after you've recovered from a heart attack.

FALSE. While you're in the hospital, your doctor may have you walk in the hallway for a few minutes while accompanied by a healthcare professional. After you've been discharged from the hospital, you may be prescribed cardiac rehabilitation, a supervised exercise program that slowly strengthens your cardiorespiratory system and teaches you how to adopt a heart-healthy lifestyle. After you complete the program, your doctor may offer guidance on exercise.

13. True/False: Women are more likely than men to have heart attack symptoms beyond chest pain, such as neck pain, jaw pain and abdominal pain.

TRUE. While some women feel chest, shoulder, neck and/or jaw pain, many do not. Instead, they may experience nausea, sweating, shortness of breath and general malaise. Some women have reported their symptoms were so vague that they thought they had acid reflux or the flu, but certainly not a heart attack.

14. True/False: Some heart attacks cause no symptoms at all, especially those that happen to people with diabetes.

TRUE. Heart attacks without symptoms are called silent heart attacks. And they can damage your heart just like a heart attack with symptoms. The downside of these heart attacks without symptoms is that you're unaware you need medical intervention. Some heart attacks, particularly mild ones, don't produce symptoms. And you may not feel heart attack symptoms if your blood vessels have nerve damage, which can occur in patients with type 2 diabetes.

15. True/False: Most major heart attacks occur in people with normal cholesterol levels.

TRUE. Several studies, including one published in a recent edition of the Journal of the American Heart Association, have found that most major heart attacks occur in people with normal cholesterol levels. Your focus should be on your overall risk for a heart attack or stroke, not simply your cholesterol levels.

16. True/False: Half of all American adults have at least one of three major risk factors for heart disease: high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking.

TRUE. Forty-nine percent of Americans have at least one of the three major risk factors for heart disease — high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking. And about one in every three Americans is sedentary.

17. True/False: If you do not smoke, your risk of having a heart attack is cut in half after one year.

TRUE. After one year of being smoke free, your excess risk of coronary artery disease is half of someone who still smokes, and there's a significant reduction in your risk for a heart attack, according to the American Cancer Society.

18. True/False: If heart disease runs in your family, there is little you can do to reduce your own risk for developing the disease.

FALSE. Work with your doctor to help you control your risk factors and live a heart-healthy lifestyle. You can do a lot to reduce your risk even if you have a genetic predisposition towards heart disease.

19. True/False: Two out of three people with diabetes will die from heart attack or stroke.

TRUE. American Heart Association reports that 68 percent of people 65 or older with diabetes die from some form of heart disease and 16 percent die from stroke.

20. True/False: Compared to the general population, people with depression have more than a 60 percent greater risk of developing heart disease.

TRUE. Psychological distress such as depression has a strong association with heart attacks and strokes in men and women, according to a study published in Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes.

21. Which of the following foods is worst for your cholesterol?

- A. A cup of ice cream
- B. A 3 oz. filet mignon
- C. A scrambled egg
- D. A medium French fries

A cup of ice cream. The simple carbs (sugar) and saturated fat in ice cream contribute most to raising cholesterol levels — more than a small, 4-oz. filet mignon, French fries or eggs.

22. True/False: Heart disease is preventable 80 percent of the time through lifestyle changes.

True. A CDC report attributed 80 percent of coronary artery disease-related deaths to lifestyle factors such as obesity, smoking, unhealthy diet, sedentary lifestyle and excessive alcohol consumption.

23. True/False: A primary care doctor is the best doctor to help prevent a heart attack.

True. Primary care physicians are on the front lines of care, when it comes to heart disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Studies show that patients who utilize primary care physicians have better cardiovascular outcomes. Your primary care physician can keep you up-to-date on preventive screenings, guide you on living a heart-healthy lifestyle and prescribe medications to help control risk factors. While some patients may ultimately need to see a cardiologist, it's usually their primary care doctor who makes the referral.

24. True/False: Having enough good cholesterol offsets bad cholesterol.

False. Good cholesterol doesn't cancel out bad cholesterol. Although good cholesterol can protect your cardiovascular system, too much bad cholesterol will still raise your risk for a heart attack or stroke.

25. True/False: The trigger for most heart attacks and strokes is inflammation, not the build up of cholesterol, in the arteries.

True. Inflammation is believed to promote cholesterol plaque buildup and ruptures, which trigger the clotting process and result in stroke or heart attack.

26. True/False: If you have heart disease, you should eat as little fat as possible.

False. You should eliminate trans fats from your diet and limit saturated fat, but experts recommend adding healthy fats like raw nuts and seeds, avocados, salmon and olive oil.

27. True/False: Not exercising is worse for your health than smoking, diabetes and heart disease.

True. A lower level of cardiorespiratory fitness was found to be greater or equal cardiovascular disease risk as diabetes and smoking, according to a study published in JAMA Network Open.

28. True/False: The annual out-of-pocket cost for someone with heart disease is more than double the cost for someone with diabetes.

True. Heart disease is expensive. It costs around \$4,279 a year vs. type 2 diabetes at \$1,922 a year. It gets really expensive if you have an event like a heart attack or stroke. If you have a heart attack, for example, Medicare estimates you'll spend 60 percent more out of pocket annually versus someone who hasn't. That's around \$12,000 a year, every year, for potentially the rest of your life.

Have you talked to your doctor about your risk for heart disease? It's an important conversation—one that could save your life. Use the discussion guide that you downloaded along with this answer key to get the talk started. Don't have a primary care doctor? Go to MDVIP.com and find one near you.