

Risk Factors for Heart Attack (Cardiovascular Risk Factors)

Cardiovascular diseases include coronary artery disease (heart attacks), cerebrovascular disease (stroke) and peripheral vascular disease. The basic cause of these problems is the buildup of fatty deposits (atherosclerotic plaques) within the lining of blood vessels.

What are the risk factors?

- Hypertension
- Smoking
- High cholesterol
- Increasing age
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Lack of exercise
- Stress,
- Family history
- Male gender

Hypertension

The higher the blood pressure, the greater is the risk. Yearly checks for blood pressure are advised. The Ideal blood pressure is 120/80mmHg. It is recommended to keep blood pressure below 140/ 90mmHg.

Smoking

The risk of heart problems is 70% more in the smokers as compared to the non-smokers.

High Cholesterol

It has been proven that high cholesterol is related to heart attacks. High cholesterol happens with diet high in saturated fats. It is recommended that every effort should be made to keep the total blood cholesterol in the normal range. Saturated fats should be eliminated from the diet. They are found in regular milk and its products, fatty meats, pies, and pastry etc.

Diabetes

Diabetes is a powerful risk factor. The aim should be to keep your fasting blood sugar less than 110 mg/dl and HbA1c less than 6.5%.

Stress and heart attacks

The stress of our modern lifestyle is regarded as a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Modify your stress factors and seek relaxation programs like meditation. Stress also causes the liver to produce more cholesterol.

The significance of risk factors

If more risk factors are involved, the risk of getting heart problem is higher too. Manage your risk factors before you get serious problems.

It is recommended that every person visits their family doctor for annual health check and basic blood screen, to pick up asymptomatic disease and modify risk factors if present.

Dr Sadaf Sarwar

MBBS (King Edward Medical College),

Fellow Royal Australian College of General Practitioner (FRACGP, Australia)

Ex-Assistant Professor, The University of Lahore, Pakistan

Consultant General and Family Physician