



PREVENTING CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

In the United States, heart disease is and has been the leading killer among most ethnic groups for the past several years. Just three years ago, over a quarter of all deaths in the U.S. were attributed to heart disease.

The Office of Minority Health says that African American men are 30 percent more likely to die from heart disease than non-Hispanic white males.

What's more, 32 percent of adult African Americans have high blood pressure compared with 22.5 percent of whites. High blood pressure makes



Sylvester Ejeh, M.D.
Cardiologist

by one-half," says Dr. Ejeh. "Several years after quitting, it approaches that of non-smokers."

To further limit your chances of developing CVD, control your high blood pressure and diabetes. If you suffer from either of these conditions, consult your physician about how they could affect your cardiovascular health.

Don't forget that daily exercise can go along way in preventing CVD too! Dr. Ejeh advises taking a brisk twenty- to thirty-minute walk at least four times per week. Also consider having a glass of wine with dinner, as daily consumption of small amounts of alcohol can help.

"One drink for women and up to two

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the heart work too hard to pump blood, which puts pressure on their blood vessels.

Sylvester Ejeh, M.D., a cardiologist with Cumberland Cardiology in Fayetteville, says lifestyle choices put the African American population at greater risk for developing cardiovascular disease (CVD) and high blood pressure than others.

"African Americans are less likely to engage in physical activity," says Dr. Ejeh, "and are more likely to be obese and have diabetes, which are all risk factors for CVD."

While one cannot change his or her race, there are plenty of factors that can be treated or controlled to help lessen one's risk of suffering from heart disease.

Cigarette smokers are two to four times more likely to develop heart disease than non-smokers, according to the American Heart Association. Yet 24 percent of non-Hispanic black men and 17.2 percent of non-Hispanic black women smoke.

"One year after quitting, the risk of heart attack and death from coronary heart disease is reduced

drinks per day for men can lower the risk of cardiovascular disease," says Ejeh. "However heavy alcohol consumers have the highest risks of CVD, so be sure to exercise moderation when consuming alcohol."

Another key way to lower your risk for CVD is to decrease the amount of stress in your life. Go out for dinner with your friends, enjoy quality time outside with your family or spend time at your church worshipping.

"Being spiritually active and reducing negative stress by attending a place of worship is an integral part of African American culture and can go a long way in preventing heart disease," says Dr. Ejeh.

And just in case you need one more way to prevent CVD, add a little laughter to your day!

"Laughter is a good medicine," says Ejeh.

It's great at getting your heart rate up and putting a smile on your face!



**TAKE
CHARGE
OF YOUR
HEALTH**