



Catholic Healthcare West

Ask the Expert

Arizona Republic

Q: Since my father recently retired, he has put on a lot of weight. I am so happy that he has retired, but I am growing increasingly nervous about his health. What are the risk factors of heart disease and is weight gain one of them?

A: According to the American Heart Association, about one in three adult men have some form of cardiovascular disease. This is definitely an eye-opening statistic and you and your father definitely do not want to be a part of it.

Your father can reduce his risk of heart disease by making healthier lifestyle choices and getting appropriate treatment for conditions that may increase his risk of developing cardiovascular disease such as high cholesterol, diabetes and high blood pressure. There are also several preventive measures everyone can take to help ensure their heart health:

- Don't smoke or use tobacco products.
- Eat a diet that includes fruits and vegetables, and avoid high-fat foods.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes most days of the week.
- Have your cholesterol checked.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar under control.
- Get regular blood pressure check-ups.
- Take a daily dose of aspirin, if your physician recommends it.

Being overweight in middle age greatly increases risk of hospitalization for and death from heart disease and diabetes in older age, according to a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. To help maintain his weight, encourage your father to incorporate at least 30 to 60 minutes of exercise into his routine four to six times a week. Aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, swimming, jogging or biking, will provide his heart with an optimal workout.

If your father is still unsure if he is at risk for developing heart disease, have him log on to www.chwhealthspan.org/heartaware to take Catholic Healthcare West's free evaluation. The test takes less than seven minutes to complete and may just save his life.



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Darcel Taylor, R.N., is the cardiac clinician for CHW's HeartAware™ program. To learn more about HeartAware™, or to arrange for a free, in-person consultation, please visit www.chwhealthspan.org/heartaware or call 480.728.3639.