



Catholic Healthcare West

Ask the Expert
Arizona Republic

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Q: Am I at risk for developing heart disease because it runs in my family?

A: Yes. Unfortunately, a person's genetics, in addition to their age and gender, are all risk factors that contribute to heart disease. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), there are several risk factors that can be changed to help reduce a person's risk of developing heart disease. Among these are:

- Smoking. People who smoke are at two to four times higher risk of developing coronary artery disease than a person who does not.
- High cholesterol and high blood pressure.
- Individuals who are overweight. People who gain weight in their waist are at a higher risk of heart disease. However, by losing just 10 pounds an overweight person can help decrease their risk.
- Non-active individuals.
- People with diabetes. Individuals whose blood sugar levels are not in the normal range are at a higher risk of developing heart disease.

You cannot control the fact that heart disease is in your family, which puts you at higher risk for developing heart disease, but you *can* lesson your risk by keeping the risk factors mentioned above under control.

February is American Heart Month. To find out if you are at risk for cardiovascular disease, log on to **heartawaretest.com** and take the HeartAware™ free online evaluation. The test takes less than seven minutes to complete and may just save your life. To learn more about heart disease, visit **heart.org**.

Dorothy McClure, R.N., is the cardiac clinician for Catholic Healthcare West's HeartAware™ program. To learn more about HeartAware™, or to arrange for a free, in-person consultation, please visit heartawaretest.com or call 480.728.3639.