



Disproportionate Prevalence and Medical Outcomes of Cardiovascular Disease in the Black Community. FAQ Sheet

1. Is wearing a heart monitor for one week an effective indicator to determine the need for a pacemaker?

Several tests are generally done to determine cause of an irregular heartbeat which may require a pacemaker including

- An Electrocardiogram (ECG).
- Holter Monitoring – portable version of ECG, generally worn 1-2 days.
- Echocardiogram – noninvasive test using sound waves to see action of heart.
- Stress test- ECG done before and immediately after exercise.

2. How does wine impact heart disease? Is wine as part of Mediterranean helpful? What are some of the best foods to minimize heart disease?

- Red wine, in moderation, has been thought of as heart healthy due to antioxidants that may help prevent coronary artery disease which may lead to heart attacks. Links between red wine and decreased risk of heart attacks are not completely understood. Any alcohol, especially in women should be used in moderation.
- Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure (BP) to unhealthy levels including more than three drinks in one sitting or repeated binge drinking.
- If you have high blood pressure, avoid alcohol or drink only in moderation.
- The Mediterranean diet, a heart healthy diet, is one high in fresh fruits and vegetables as well as whole grains, nuts, healthy fats. It includes weekly intake of fish, poultry, beans,

and eggs with limited red meat. Red wine, in moderation may be included as part of the diet.

- Vegetarian and vegan diets can reduce the risk of heart disease provided that they do not rely heavily on processed foods which can be high in calories, sugar, fat, and sodium.

3. What is a healthy blood pressure (BP) and when might medication be prescribed Keeping BP in the normal range decreases risk of cardiovascular disease including heart attack and stroke?

- Normal BP is a systolic <120 and diastolic <80.
- Elevated BP is systolic between 120-129 and diastolic <80.
- High blood pressure (hypertension) is systolic ≥ 130 and diastolic ≥ 80 .

4. What does it mean to have low blood pressure (hypotension)?

- A BP < 90 systolic or top number of the BP or < 60 for the diastolic or bottom number is generally considered low.
- For some patients, their BP runs low and causes no problems.
- For others persistently low BP may be caused by serious medical disorders. If symptoms are associated with the low BP, see your healthcare provider for evaluation.

5. For hypertension diagnosed at a young age and told it was genetic, what helps besides medication?

- For hypertension diagnosed at an early age, an evaluation should occur to make sure there are not underlying medical conditions causing the high BP.
- Maintaining a healthy diet and regular exercise can be additive to the high blood pressure medicines.

6. What types of questions should be asked that might direct attention to your heart health needs?

- One should ask your healthcare provider what risk factors do they identify in your history that might put you at risk for cardiovascular disease and then discuss how to lessen those risks.

7. With COVID restrictions, how do we maintain appointments with physicians?

- Healthcare organizations, including physician offices and clinics are taking significant precautions to lessen risks of COVID transmission. Maintain appointments that are necessary for your health.

8. Based on what was said about being on alert if your mother or father died from heart disease. Should you be concerned if an aunt or uncle died from a heart attack?

- Discuss with your health care provider any known cardiovascular disease within your family members. This will help them in assessing whether you may have an elevated risk or whether additional testing should be done.

9. What can we say to patients who are shy about talking to the doctor about their symptoms? Some feel as though they do not know what to ask or how to approach the subject.

- Encourage anyone to always tell their healthcare provider about any symptoms of concern. If you feel uncomfortable about asking, bring along a friend or family member to the appointment who can help with asking questions.
- Consider writing your questions down and taking them to your appointment.

10. What kind of BP machine is best? Is a wrist monitor machine and other forms of monitoring such as apps ok? How are BP monitors calibrated?

- Digital monitors fitted on the upper arm are generally most accurate. Home device accuracy should be checked once per year by comparing to readings obtained in your doctor's office.
- Wrist device accuracy can likewise be compared to your doctor's office reading. However, the American Heart Association recommends using the upper arm and not wrists or finger monitors.

- Public (e. g. pharmacy) BP monitor accuracy is dependent upon whether the cuff size is appropriate for you and proper use of the machines.
- BP readings should be taken over the skin if possible and not through clothing

11. What is the difference between the upper BP number (systolic) and the lower BP number (diastolic)?

- The systolic number is the pressure of the blood flow when your heart muscle contracts to pump blood.
- The diastolic number is the pressure measured between heartbeats.

12. Is it possible to lower BP with diet and exercise and which is a better approach?

- For some individuals, eating a healthy diet, such as the Mediterranean or other healthy in addition to regular exercise can lower BP, often due to weight loss. Sometimes BP medication can be avoided or the amount of medication decreased. For others, medication is still needed with diet and exercise assisting in BP control.

13. What is the desired BMI (Body Mass Index)?

- The BMI is a formula that used weight and height to estimate body fat. A high BMI carries an increased risk for cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. BMI may underestimate body fat in older adults or those with low muscle mass or overestimate in people who are very physically fit or very muscular. Waist size in addition to BMI should be looked at as health risks increase with increasing waist size regardless of BMI.
- $BMI = \frac{\text{Weight (in pounds)} \times 703}{\text{height (in inches)}^2}$ or $\frac{\text{weight(kilograms)}}{\text{height (meters)}^2}$.
- BMI < 18.5 = underweight; 18.5 to < 25 normal; 25 to < 30 overweight; ≥ 30 obese.

- BMI should also be monitored in children during well child visits.

14. How much does a person's lifestyle and economic status influence whether or not a doctor will give the highest care?

- We know that health disparities and inequities exist with persons of color generally having lower health outcomes compared to white patients. Care received is highly variable depending on the individual situation. That is why arming ourselves with knowledge to be able to advocate for ourselves and our loved ones is key

15. If my high BP is controlled with medication, do I still say I have high BP?

- Yes, it is still important to indicate when asked that you have high blood pressure, although you may add that it is well controlled if falling within the desired normal range or if your healthcare provider is happy with your numbers.

16. Is there any adverse reaction with COVID 19 vaccine and BP medications?

- Not to our knowledge at this time.
- Please discuss your medication regimen with your healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

17. What cholesterol level determines the need for medication?

- Elevated low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, the ‘bad’ cholesterol and elevated triglycerides increases cardiovascular disease risk.
- High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol is the “good” cholesterol and has a protective effect against cardiovascular disease.

18. What are the side effects of blood pressure medicines?

- Like many medications, antihypertensive medications may have side effects which are generally found on the package inserts provided by pharmacists.

- Side effects vary by medication.
- Discuss with your healthcare provider expected side effects of any medication that may be prescribed .

19. Does the amount of sleep have an impact on heart health?

- Evidence suggests a relationship between sleep deprivation and cardiovascular disease. Studies are ongoing to understand the exact effect.

20. What is the recommended sodium intake per day?

- The American Heart Association recommends limiting sodium intake to less than 1500 mg per day. Just 1 tsp of salt contains approximately 2300 mg of sodium.
- Processed, prepackaged and restaurant foods account for most of the sodium in American diets.

Prepared By

Michele Halyard MD, FASTRO, Former Western Area HHS Chair, Dean of the Arizona Campus of Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine, Phoenix (AZ) Chapter in collaboration with:

Laura Espy-Bell, MD, MHA, FACEP, Emergency Medicine Department, OhioHealth, Columbus (OH) Chapter

Pamela Garmon Johnson, VP National Vice President, Health Equity Impact and Partnership; National Executive Director of the National Hypertension Control Initiative, American Heart Association, Windy City (IL) Chapter

Paula Orr, MD, CEO, Charleston Women's Wellness Center and Charleston Health & Wellness Medispa, Member, HeartLinks and Walk for Healthy Signature Programs Committee, Charleston (SC) Chapter