

# African-Americans and Heart Disease

African-Americans are at greater risk of dying from heart disease than whites. In 2007, African-Americans in Missouri had a significantly higher death rate (273.4 deaths per 100,000 people) than whites (208.4 deaths per 100,000 people).<sup>1</sup>

African-Americans are also more likely to die from heart disease at a younger age. The death rate from heart disease for Missourians under age 65 is almost two times higher for African-Americans than for whites.<sup>1</sup>

Heart disease costs for African-Americans are high. In 2006, hospitalization costs for African Americans in Missouri totaled \$243 million.<sup>1</sup>

## Risk factors

Many of the risk factors for heart disease are more common in African-Americans than whites. In Missouri:

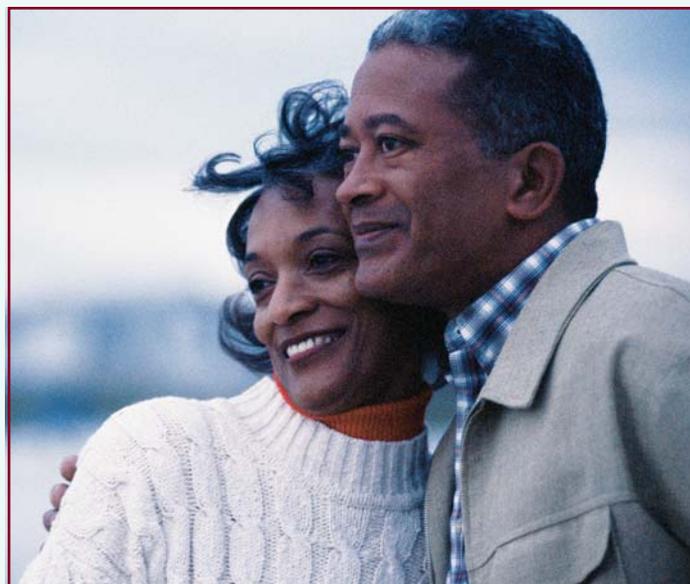
- 41.9 percent of African-Americans have been told at some point in their life that they have high blood pressure.
- 30.9 percent have high cholesterol.
- 30.8 percent smoke.
- 72.6 percent are overweight or obese.
- 80.9 percent do not eat the recommended five daily servings of fruits and vegetables.
- 34.3 percent do not participate in physical activity during their leisure time.<sup>2</sup>

## Reducing the risk

There are a number of things you can do to help reduce your risk of developing heart disease:

- Monitor blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Take medications as prescribed.
- See a health care provider for regular check-ups.
- Quit smoking.
- Be physically active for 30 minutes or more on most days of the week.
- Eat a healthy diet to maintain a healthy weight.

*Data Source: 1. Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Missouri Information for Community Assessment, 2006, 2007  
2. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2007*



## Warning signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, while others start slowly with mild pain or discomfort. Many times, people aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting medical attention. The warning signs of a heart attack include:

- Chest discomfort (angina) – including pain, squeezing, tightness or pressure in the center of the chest – that lasts more than a few minutes or that goes away and returns
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body – one or both arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath – before or during chest discomfort
- Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness
- Heavy sweating
- Paleness

**If you experience chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the other warning signs, call 911 immediately.**

More information about heart disease can be found at [www.dhss.mo.gov/HeartDisease/](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/HeartDisease/)



Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services  
Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program  
[www.dhss.mo.gov/HeartDisease](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/HeartDisease) and [www.dhss.mo.gov/Stroke](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/Stroke)

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