Making Changes

Accepting the things you cannot change, courage to change the things you can…

There are quite a few risk factors of cardiovascular disease. As with anything, there are some factors you can change and others you cannot. Age, ethnicity, family history, are aspects of yourself that you cannot prevent or change. Whether you like it or not, you often inherit the health issues of your family members. By the same token, you are going to age – whether you like it or not. Though you can dream of a magic fountain of youth, everyone ages, which inherently increases your risk of disease.

Since we cannot change these things about ourselves, let’s discuss the risk factors that we can change. Smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, unhealthy diet, hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes – all of these things can be treated or prevented. In fact, many of these factors can actually be linked to one another. Therefore, if you improve upon just a few of these, you have the potential to heighten your general health and overall well-being - not to mention, significantly increase your cardiovascular health.

Physical inactivity, as noted by the World Heart Federation, increases your risk of heart disease by 50%. Inactivity often leads to obesity which can then put you at risk for diabetes. Type 2 diabetes, in itself, is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Furthermore, the World Heart Federation says, “If you do not control diabetes then you are more likely to develop cardiovascular disease at an earlier age than other people and it will be more devastating.” With this in mind, exercise is crucial to maintaining good heart health. By simply adding exercise to your routine, you can decrease your risk for cardiac issues fairly quickly.

Hypertension, also referred to as high blood pressure, is another treatable risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Hypertension patients, as long as they do not go undiagnosed or untreated, should not be at major risk of heart disease. Along with high blood pressure, high cholesterol can contribute to heart problems. High cholesterol can be lowered by following a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and medication, if needed.

Smoking, and tobacco use in any form, will put you at a greater risk for heart disease than a non-smoker. The risk is particularly high if you are a long-term or heavy user, or you are a woman. Quitting smoking, even minimal use, will immediately lower your risk.

With a handful of lifestyle changes, you can take lowering your risk of cardiovascular disease into your own hands.