

# SMART about your Heart and Risk Factors

**S- Start with learning how your heart works.** Your heart functions as pump which circulates blood throughout your body. Optimal heart functioning depends on:

- Coronary arteries and other blood vessels to carry oxygen rich blood and other nutrients to the heart muscle
- Effective pumping action (and ability of the heart to relax and fill)
- Valves which keep blood flowing through the heart's 4 heart chambers
- An electrical system that keeps the heart in rhythm

Cardiovascular heart disease can affect any or all of the parts of your heart and arteries such as those that supply blood to your brain, kidneys, or legs. Atherosclerosis, the buildup of plaque in arteries can be prevented from developing or progressing by making lifestyle changes and taking certain medications. Healthy lifestyle and medications are important after treatments such as stent or bypass surgery. For many other types of cardiac disease treatment can include specific interventions such as valve surgery, taking medications and reducing cardiac risk factors.

**M- Make taking your cardiac medications and following a healthy lifestyle a priority because these actions will reduce risk for future cardiac events.** A healthy lifestyle is tobacco free, eating healthy, exercising regularly, and reducing stress/ promoting relaxation. Your cardiac medications will help protect your heart.

**A- Acknowledge your cardiac risk factors.** Cardiac risk factors include:

- Smoking
- Lack of exercise and /or decreased physical fitness
- High blood pressure
- High LDL cholesterol and/or high triglycerides, and/or low HDL cholesterol
- Excess weight
- Diabetes or Pre-Diabetes
- Psychosocial Risk factors (depression/anxiety, social isolation, hostility, stress etc)
- Non modifiable risk factors: Increasing age and family history of heart disease

**R-Remember Cardiac Rehabilitation is designed to assist you with learning and understanding about your cardiovascular conditions, personal cardiac risk factors, medications and developing healthy sustainable lifestyle habits.**

**T- Take time to learn more by:**

- Reading and completing weekly "Smart About " topics and activities
- Attending the group Heart Smart classes
- Please answer the following questions.

1. **True or False** The heart is a muscle which pumps oxygen rich blood throughout the body.
  
2. **What are features of a healthy heart?** Check all that are true.
  - An electrical system that allows the heart to beat regularly or stay in rhythm
  - Valves which work properly to allow blood to move forward through the 4 chambers of the heart.
  - Effective pumping action or contraction of the heart muscle in order to meet the body's need for oxygen as well as adequate relaxation for the heart to fill
  - Coronary arteries that allow adequate blood flow to nourish the heart itself
  
3. **True or False** Risk factors are lifestyles, behaviors and body traits that can increase your chance of developing Coronary Artery Disease /angina/heart attack, Carotid Artery Disease / Stroke, Peripheral Artery Disease and, if left untreated, can lead to the progression or worsening of cardiovascular heart disease.
  
4. **Circle the risk factors that apply to you. (Be sure to include those that are currently well controlled and ones you are now addressing now). Fill in what you think is a healthy range for your BP even if high blood pressure is not a risk factor for you.**

Smoking

Second hand smoke exposure

High blood pressure: A healthy range for my blood pressure is \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

High LDL cholesterol / High triglycerides/Low HDL

Inactivity/Lack of regular exercise

Excess weight / waist > 40 in men, > 35 women

Diabetes

Pre diabetes

Stress/Depression/Anxiety

Other:

**Please review your answers with staff**