

The Heart Of The Matter

(NAPSA)—Everyone is at risk for heart disease and stroke. People of all ages, genders, races and ethnicities are affected. However, certain populations, including African Americans, are at higher risk than others.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD), including heart disease and stroke, remains the No. 1 killer of Americans. Recent studies have shown that nearly 44 percent of African-American men and 48 percent of African-American women have some form of CVD.

African Americans are also twice as likely as whites to die from preventable heart disease and stroke. Black men are at highest risk of dying early from these conditions. Why are African Americans hardest hit by CVD? Some factors that may contribute to this disparity are that African Americans have the highest rates of high blood pressure compared to other ethnicities—which increases your risk of heart disease and stroke—and high rates of overweight and obesity, elevated cholesterol levels and limited awareness of risk factors.

The good news is that you can beat these conditions. When it comes to reducing your risk for heart disease and stroke, the decisions you make every day—and can control—play a big role.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), you can reduce your risk and improve your heart health by following the **ABCS**:

1. **A:** Take aspirin as directed by your health care professional.
2. **B:** Control your blood pressure.

Meet Roosevelt

Smoking causes immediate damage to your body. For Roosevelt, it caused a heart attack. Your risk drops as soon as you quit smoking.



At 45, Roosevelt experienced a heart attack that landed him in the hospital for a month. In order to repair the damage to his heart caused by smoking, doctors inserted stents into his heart. When that wasn't enough, he had bypass surgery—six surgeries in all. Roosevelt is now smoke-free, but he's had to give up his career as a commercial plumber because his heart is no longer strong enough for the strenuous activity such work requires.

Learn more about Roosevelt and the importance of stopping smoking from CDC's *Tips from Former Smokers* campaign at <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/>. Watch Roosevelt's videos online or see his TV ads running on a station near you.



3. **C:** Manage your cholesterol.

4. **S:** Don't smoke.

A: Take aspirin as directed by your health care provider.

Ask your health care professional if aspirin can reduce your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Be sure to tell him or her if you have a family history of heart disease or stroke and mention your own medical history.

B: Control your blood pressure.

High blood pressure often has no symptoms, so be sure to have it checked on a regular basis.

You can check your blood pressure at home, at a pharmacy or at a doctor's office. Making even small lifestyle changes, like reducing sodium (salt) in your diet and being physically active, can reduce high blood pressure.

C: Manage your cholesterol.

Cholesterol is a waxy, fatlike substance that your body needs, but when you have too much in your blood, it can build up on the walls of your arteries. This can lead to heart disease and stroke.

Eating foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol and high in fiber can help prevent high cholesterol. Your health care team should test your cholesterol levels at least once every five years. Talk to your health care professional about this simple blood test and how to lower your bad cholesterol if it's too high.

S: Don't smoke.

Cigarette smoking greatly increases your risk for heart disease. About one in five African-American adults smoke cigarettes. If you're a smoker, quit as soon as possible. If you don't smoke, don't start. Talk with your health care professional about how to quit smoking. Additional free resources include 1-800-QUIT-NOW and smokefree.gov.

Remember, every step brings you closer to a healthier heart and every healthy choice makes a difference! More information on CVD and heart health is available on CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention website: www.cdc.gov/dhdsdp.