

5 numbers you need to know by heart



Pass codes, phone numbers, social security numbers, clothing sizes and addresses. We all have a lot of numbers in our heads, but there are 5 more numbers you need to know. These are the numbers your doctor will use to assess your risk for getting heart disease.



1. BLOOD PRESSURE

This is the force of blood against the walls of the arteries. It's measured as two numbers—the systolic pressure, as the heart beats, over the diastolic pressure, as the heart relaxes between beats. A normal blood pressure is under 120/80. Talk to your doctor if it is higher than that. Simple lifestyle changes can help you lower your blood pressure and potentially avoid taking medication.

2. BMI

This measures your weight for your body surface area. It is used to help determine if body fatness is a risk for heart problems for most people. Use an online calculator to assess your risk.

3. WAIST CIRCUMFERENCE

Fat that is carried around the abdomen increases the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Measure your waist at the belly button, not where your clothing waistband sits. A waist circumference of more than 35 inches for women or more than 40 inches for men increases your risk.

4. CHOLESTEROL

While the body makes all of the cholesterol it needs, it is also found in animal sources of food. High cholesterol can lead to heart disease and build-up of plaque in the arteries. A healthy cholesterol number is below 200. A healthy LDL number is generally below 100 or 70, depending on your heart disease risk.

5. BLOOD SUGAR

This reading tells doctors how much glucose is in the blood. High levels of blood glucose cause diabetes, which increases the risk for cardiovascular disease. A healthy fasting blood sugar number is under 100 after not eating for 8-12 hours.

