

South Asians and Heart Health:

Take Control Now

If you identify as a South Asian, your risk of developing heart disease is four times greater than the general population.¹ Additionally, South Asians develop heart disease on average 10 years earlier than those of other descent¹ and can have cardiovascular disease even with a normal BMI. Besides your ethnic origin, other factors such as diabetes and high cholesterol put you at a higher risk for heart disease.

You can take control of your health and well-being by being proactive, and taking the necessary steps to focus on prevention and screening. Take the initial step by making an appointment with your primary care provider to discuss your individual risk factors.

Don't let heart disease sneak up on you. Know your risk.

Do you know your numbers?



- ▶ **Cholesterol** – If you are more than 20 years old, your cholesterol should be checked every 5 years unless your doctor tells you otherwise.
- ▶ **Blood pressure** – A normal blood pressure reading is less than 120/80. A reading between 120-129/<80 is in the pre-hypertensive range, and $\geq 130/80$ is considered high.
- ▶ **Blood sugar** – Risk factors for diabetes include obesity (especially around the waist), family history, inactivity, smoking, ethnicity (particularly South Asian). If you have any of these risk factors, discuss screening for diabetes with your health care provider.
- ▶ **BMI (Body Mass Index), Waist circumference** – This refers to how much you weigh for your height. You may be at risk even with a “normal” BMI if you carry your weight around your waist. Increased risk occurs much sooner for Asian individuals, at BMI >23 .

What can you do to lower your risk of heart disease?

- ▶ Quit smoking.
- ▶ Eat a healthy diet.
- ▶ Maintain a normal weight; lose weight if overweight/obese.
- ▶ Get regular exercise. 150 minutes/week of moderate intensity exercise or 75 minutes/week of vigorous exercise.
- ▶ Pay attention to your mental health and stress levels. Get help if you need it.
- ▶ Make an appointment with a health care provider for a routine physical exam.
- ▶ Take your medications as prescribed.



➔ **For healthcare providers:**
Help your South Asian patients understand their unique risk factors and screen appropriately for heart disease.

To read more about what you can do to improve your heart health, including ways to incorporate a heart-healthy South Asian diet, go to cignaproducer.com/heart-health/

Together, all the way.®



1. Krishnan, Sandeep. “Cover Story- South Asians and Cardiovascular Disease: The Hidden Threat”. Cardiology Magazine, May 2019, <https://www.acc.org/latest-in-cardiology/articles/2019/05/07/12/42/cover-story-south-asians-and-cardiovascular-disease-the-hidden-threat>

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