

The Cardiovascular Health Equation

Heart attack and stroke are two of the leading killers in our community. But adding some simple preventive steps into your life can make all the difference.

Know Your Numbers

The American Heart Association and the Mayo Clinic consider these the ideal cardiovascular health numbers for most adults:

Blood Pressure
120/80 mm HG

Fasting Blood Sugar
100 mg/dL

Body Mass Index (BMI)
25 kg/m²

HDL Cholesterol
60 mg/dL

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“blood pressure, BMI, waist circumference, cholesterol
and blood sugar—gives us a lot of guidance as to where
you’re most at risk.”*

Betty Wang, D.O., primary care physician



Plenty of self-help and dieting books will try to sell you the secrets to a long and healthy life. But if you ask your primary care provider, the answer isn't that mysterious. It just requires a little math—and a commitment to your cardiovascular health.

“In primary care, we know that managing the risk factors for heart attack and stroke are significant game-changers in a person's longevity and quality of life,” explains Betty Wang, D.O., an internal medicine specialist with BW Primary Care, a LifeBridge Health community physician practice. “Monitoring your essential numbers—blood pressure, BMI, waist circumference, cholesterol and blood sugar—gives us a lot of guidance as to where you're most at risk.” (See page 2)

Knowing your numbers is easier than it sounds; it's all data that's collected and reviewed by your primary care provider during your annual check up. (A simple blood draw is typically all that's required.) Your provider will also use your annual check up to review your other risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as family history, age, gender and ethnicity, as well as diet and other lifestyle choices.

“Your primary care provider's job is to understand the whole picture,” says Dr. Wang. “If we determine that you are moderate- to high-risk, we can take additional steps like ordering a CT calcium score [a heart scan] or nuclear stress test to evaluate your cardiovascular health further.”

Your primary care provider can also help you make important lifestyle changes, which can make all the difference. The scenario is unique to every patient, but that can mean eliminating tobacco use; reducing stress; managing your weight; minimizing alcohol, sugary drinks and processed foods; and taking control of chronic diseases such as diabetes. For most patients, exercise is also key; providers recommend aiming for 150 minutes a week of aerobic activity.

“Studies show that this magic number—150 minutes a week—can reduce heart attack and stroke morbidity by 25 percent or more,” Dr. Wang points out. “That has a bigger impact than any medications we can give you.”

And if a cardiovascular emergency should occur, it's helpful to have a primary care provider that's closely aligned with a hospital like Northwest Hospital. Accredited as a Primary Stroke Center by the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems and equipped with the highly specialized Emergency Chest Pain Center that's accredited by the American College of Cardiology, Northwest Hospital has implemented nationally developed treatment protocols that are proven to significantly improve outcomes for heart attack and stroke patients.

“I always know that my patients are in good hands with the clinicians at Northwest,” Dr. Wang says. “And because our practice is affiliated with LifeBridge Health, it allows for faster communication and the most efficient coordination of care. When a patient comes back to me, I feel like I can pick up exactly where I need to in order to help them in their healing process.”

Don't Wait. Schedule Your Annual Check Up Now.

Visit lifebridgehealth.org to find the primary care provider that's right for you.