

Look what you can do for your heart at www.sistertosister.org

- Learn the facts about heart disease
- Locate a nearby screening center
- Assess your personal level of risk
- Build a customized action plan
- Track your heart health progress
- Ask experts for advice
- Give and get community support
- Discover daily heart health tips...and more!



Sister to Sister: The Women's Heart Health Foundation, a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is dedicated to preventing heart disease in women by:

- Offering women free cardiac screenings to promote early detection and treatment of heart disease and its risk factors.
- Increasing awareness that heart disease is the number one killer of women in the United States.
- Helping women make healthy lifestyle changes to reduce their risk of heart disease.

SISTER TO SISTER

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Understanding Family History



YOU HAVE THE POWER TO HAVE A HEALTHY HEART



SISTER TO SISTER
The Women's Heart Health Foundation

The Family Health History/Heart Health Connection

Your family's health history may be one of the strongest influences on your risk of developing heart disease. If you have "early heart disease" in your family – that is a father or brother who had heart disease before age 55 or a mother or sister who had heart disease before age 65 – you are at higher risk.

You can't change your genes, but you can change many behaviors that affect them.

Start learning about your family's health history by interviewing your parents and siblings, and your own children if they're grown. The health histories of other close blood relatives can also hold important clues, so be sure to find out about aunts, uncles, and grandparents, too. It's important to record your family health history in a written format. The following is an example of what this record should include.

Family Member	Date of Birth	Health Conditions	Cause of Death	Age at Death
Mother				
Father				
Sister(s)				
Brother(s)				

Just Between Us...



- Your doctor may want you to have more frequent screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes if you have a family history of these conditions.
- When heart disease runs in your family, it's extra important to reduce risk factors you can control, such as eating a healthy diet, exercising, and maintaining a healthy weight.
- If you're a parent, keep in mind that the lifestyle changes you make for your heart can also protect your children's.

History Doesn't Have to Repeat Itself

YES YOU CAN UNDERSTAND YOUR FAMILY HISTORY



10 Guidelines to Follow

1. Make a list of all blood relatives you want to include in your family history.
2. Pick a time and place to talk, one on one. If it's not possible to talk to your relatives in person, communicate by phone or e-mail.
3. Remember that health information can be very personal, so ask open-ended questions in a non-judgmental way.
4. Ask your relatives if they've had or currently have heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes. Also ask if they are or were smokers or overweight.
5. If a relative is deceased, ask other family members about the loved one's health history, cause of death, and his/her age at death.
6. Record important dates, such as when a heart attack occurred or how long a person was a smoker.
7. If a health condition was diagnosed, be sure to find out the age the family member was when this occurred.
8. Some heart disease risk factors are higher for certain ethnicities, so ask about your ancestry.
9. Review your findings with your doctor, who will use the information to assess your health risks and recommend lifestyle changes.
10. Keep your family health history up to date. The information will not only help you, but your children will want access to it at some point, too.

GET MORE TIPS AT SISTERTOSISTER.ORG