

**T**here are many **RISK FACTORS** associated with heart attacks and strokes. Of these risk factors, there are some that you can control and some you cannot. Risk factors you cannot control include gender (male), age, family history of heart disease, and ethnicity (for example, South Asians).

The South Asian (people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal) community is the fastest growing community in Canada. Despite improvements in cardiovascular outcomes, heart disease continues to be a major cause of death worldwide. South Asians are considered to be at higher risk for developing heart disease as compared to other communities. Multiple studies of migrant South Asian populations have confirmed a 3- to 5-fold increase in the risk for myocardial infarction and cardiovascular death as compared with other ethnic groups.

They're also risk factors that **you can control**. By making changes in your lifestyle you can actually reduce your risk for **heart disease**. Risk factors that you can control are :

 **Smoking** - Talk to your doctor or local pharmacist about different nicotine replacement products or how you can get support to quit or reduce your smoking.

♥ **Physical Inactivity** - Every little bit helps. Even squeezing in 10 minute walks throughout the day can have great health benefits.

♥ **Uncontrolled stress and anger** - Find someone you trust who you can talk to about your stress or anger. You can try writing your thoughts down in a journal, or start doing yoga or meditation.

[Take a free class in stress or anxiety management](#)

♥ **High LDL cholesterol** - This is the cholesterol in your blood that carries fat to your arteries. It can create plaque and cause your blood vessels to harden and become narrow, increasing your risk of heart disease.

♥ **Low HDL cholesterol** - This is the "healthy" cholesterol that removes the "bad cholesterol" from the bloodstream.



**High blood pressure** - There are many things you can do to decrease your blood pressure. You can limit your salt intake, get physically active and take your medications as prescribed.

**Extra weight** - Especially around the stomach, can increase your risk – Follow Canada's food guide to learn about portion sizes and recommended foods to include in your diet.

**High blood sugars** - Getting your fasting blood sugars or your Hgb A1C checked at your yearly check-up with your family doctor.

## APPLE VS PEAR

A healthy waist size for South Asian women is 80cm (31.5in) or less. For South Asian men it's 90cm (35in) or less.

To find your waist, feel for your hip bone on one side of your body. Move upwards until you can feel the bones of your bottom rib. Halfway between is your waist. For most people this is where their tummy button is. Use a mirror the first time to see what you're doing, and to make it easier to measure.

