HEALTH CHAT

HEART DISEASE

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. 60 million Americans have some form of heart disease, and 50 million suffer from high blood pressure, also called hypertension. Dr. Robert Kastner, inpatient cardiology specialist for Sampson Regional Medical Center wants to answer your questions about this important medical condition.

What is heart disease?
Heart disease is any condition that causes your heart to malfunction. More specifically, it is the narrowing or blockage of the arteries and vessels that provide oxygen and nutrient-rich blood to the heart. Heart disease is progressive. It can start years, even decades, before symptoms appear.

What are the risk factors for heart disease?
Any of the following factors puts you at greater risk for heart disease: diabetes, smoking, hypertension (high blood pressure), high cholesterol and obesity. In addition, having a close family member who has suffered from heart disease also puts you at greater risk. Postmenopausal women and men older than 45 also have an increased risk of heart disease. Other heart disease factors include having a Type A personality, a high stress job, lack of exercise and a resting heart rate of 75 or above per minute.

Are women at risk for heart disease?
Definitely. A woman is twice as likely as a man to die from heart disease and six times more likely to die from a heart attack than breast cancer. Women are less likely than men to have symptoms and less likely to seek immediate attention, thus increasing their chances of death or permanent damage.