

# Lower Heart Attack Risk



A heart attack happens when the heart does not get enough blood supply for a period of time. Plaque build-up and a blood clot in one or more heart arteries is often the cause.

## **FOLLOW YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER'S ADVICE FOR LIFESTYLE MEASURES AND MEDICINES THAT HELP CONTROL:**

- Blood pressure
- Blood clots from forming
- Cholesterol and triglycerides
- Diabetes
- Heart failure, heart rhythm, and other heart problems

## **HEART DISEASE CAN BE MORE COMMON IN VETERANS WHO:**

- Served in the Gulf War
- Were exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam
- Have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Smoke
- Have diabetes and/or high blood pressure
- Are overweight and/or not very active



## **STEPS TO LOWER HEART ATTACK RISK**

- Avoid secondhand smoke. If you use tobacco, quit.
- Losing just 5-10 percent of your body weight can lower the risk for a heart attack.
- Sit less and move more. Aim for 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity activity.
- Eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Choose low-fat dairy (or plant-based), fish, beans, and lentils. Use healthy oils such as olive, canola, avocado, nuts, and seeds. Limit saturated fats, processed meats, added sugars and sugary drinks, and sodium (salt).
- Learn healthy ways to manage stress, such as exercising, practicing relaxation techniques, and spending time with friends and family.
- If you don't drink, don't start. Or, limit yourself to two drinks a day (men) or one drink a day (women or 65+).
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you have signs of sleep apnea – loud snoring or snorting during sleep, repeated periods when breathing stops 10 or more seconds during sleep, and extreme daytime sleepiness.