

1 person of 1,900 met AHA's definition of ideal heart health, study says

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Only one out of more than 1,900 people evaluated met the American Heart Association (AHA) definition of ideal cardiovascular health, according to a new study led by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Their findings were recently published online in *Circulation*.

Ideal [cardiovascular health](#) is the combination of these seven factors: nonsmoking, a [body mass index](#) less than 25, goal-level physical activity and [healthy diet](#), untreated cholesterol below 200, blood pressure below 120/80 and fasting blood sugar below 100, explained senior investigator and cardiologist Steven Reis, M.D., associate vice chancellor for clinical research at Pitt.

"Of all the people we assessed, only one out of 1,900 could claim ideal heart health," said Dr. Reis. "This tells us that the current prevalence of heart health is extremely low, and that we have a great challenge ahead of us to attain the AHA's aim of a 20 percent improvement in cardiovascular health rates by 2020."

As part of the Heart Strategies Concentrating on Risk Evaluation (Heart SCORE) study, the researchers evaluated 1,933 people ages 45 to 75 in Allegheny County with surveys, physical exams and blood tests. Less than 10 percent met five or more criteria; 2 percent met the four heart-healthy behaviors; and 1.4 percent met all three heart-healthy factors. After adjustment for age, sex and income level, blacks had 82 percent lower odds than whites of meeting five or more criteria.

A multipronged approach, including change at the individual level, the social and physical environment, policy and access to care, will be needed to help people not only avoid heart disease, but also attain heart health, Dr. Reis said.

"Many of our study participants were overweight or obese, and that likely had a powerful influence on the other behaviors and factors," he noted. "Our next step is to analyze additional data to confirm this and, based on the results, try to develop a multifaceted approach to improve health. That could include identifying predictors of success or failure at adhering to the guidelines."

Provided by University of Pittsburgh Schools of the Health Sciences

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