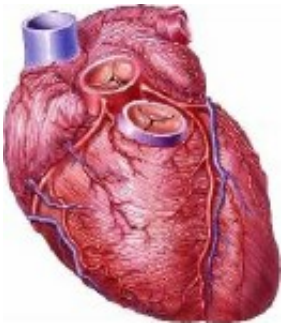


Some improvement in heart risk factors for Americans: CDC

August 3 2012, By Steven Reinberg, HealthDay Reporter



But nearly half have a predisposing issue such as hypertension, high cholesterol, agency says.

(HealthDay) -- About 47 percent of American adults have at least one risk factor for heart disease, according to a new report released Friday.

These risk factors include uncontrolled [high blood pressure](#), uncontrolled high levels of "bad" LDL cholesterol and smoking, according to the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

"We have seen declines [in risk factors], but there's still work to be done," said the report's lead author, CDC health [statistician](#) Cheryl Fryar.

Findings of the report, culled from data gathered from the U.S. National Health and [Nutrition Examination Survey](#), included:

- A drop in the rate of adults with at least one risk factor from 58 percent in 1999 to 46.5 percent in 2010.
- Men (52 percent) are more likely than women (41 percent) to have one of these risk factors.
- From 1999 to 2010, there was a drop in the percentage of whites and Mexican Americans who had at least one risk factor (about 47 percent and 45 percent respectively).
- There was no decline in the percentage of blacks with these risk factors, which remained at 58 percent.
- The prevalence of uncontrolled high blood pressure and uncontrolled high LDL cholesterol dropped between 1999 and 2010 (almost 8 percent and 9 percent, respectively).
- There was no drop in the percentage of adult [cigarette smokers](#), which remained at 25 percent of adults 20 and older.
- [Disparities](#) remain among people of different income levels and racial and ethnic groups.

"Cardiovascular disease and stroke are largely preventable, with uncontrolled high blood pressure, uncontrolled high [LDL cholesterol levels](#) and smoking representing major modifiable risk factors in men and women of all racial and ethnic groups and all income levels," said Dr. Gregg Fonarow, spokesman for the [American Heart Association](#) and professor of [cardiovascular medicine](#) at the University of California, Los Angeles.

"It is concerning that some of the early gains in lowering the rates of uncontrolled high LDL cholesterol appeared heading in the wrong direction in 2009 and 2010," Fonarow said. "This may represent recent misguided efforts to discredit the substantial cardiovascular benefits of LDL-lowering therapy."

The report found that there are significant disparities in risk factors by

age, sex, race and income levels, Fonarow noted.

"African Americans and those with incomes of less than 130 percent of the poverty level had higher prevalence of risk factors and made less progress over the study period," he said. "The reasons behind these disparities in risk factor control are likely complex, but deserving of further study."

"Substantially increased efforts to reduce or eliminate these uncontrolled cardiovascular disease and stroke [risk factors](#) at the individual, community, national and global level are clearly needed," Fonarow added.

Reasons for the stalled decline in smoking rates are not clear. Possible explanations include less money spent by states on antismoking campaigns and more advertising dollars spent by tobacco companies.

The CDC recently launched a campaign of graphic ads to get smokers to quit. Early results indicate the campaign is working.

"We have to have sustained efforts like this if we are going to have an impact on decreasing the number of smokers in this country," Dr. Len Lichtenfeld, deputy chief medical officer at the American Cancer Society, said at the time of the campaign's launch. "One of the sad facts is that although we had success a number of years ago in getting people to stop smoking, we have hit a roadblock where 20 percent of Americans still smoke."

One of the major problems is that tobacco companies easily outspend the government's efforts to curb smoking with vast sums devoted to promoting their products, Lichtenfeld said.

More information: To learn more about heart disease, visit the [U.S.](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.](#)

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