

Cardiovascular disease on the rise as fewer people achieve ideal cardiovascular health

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The number of people who have the ideal cardiovascular health score, as defined by the goals in the American Heart Association's Life's Simple 7, has decreased during the last 20 years, according to a study presented at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2015.

There have also been increases in the proportions of people having precursors of [cardiovascular disease](#), as well as in those having diagnosed cardiovascular disease.

The American Heart Association defines ideal cardiovascular health as meeting seven health metrics: eating a [balanced diet](#), being active, managing your weight, eliminating tobacco smoke, and maintaining ideal levels of blood sugar, cholesterol, and [blood pressure](#); achieving these metrics has been associated with lower rates of cardiovascular disease.

In this study, researchers studied the prevalence of the ideal cardiovascular health score among 3,460 adults, who were measured for the metrics from one to four times during 1990 to 2008 as part of the Framingham Heart Study.

They found:

- The proportion of people with an ideal score decreased from 8.5 percent during the period 1991-1995 to 5.8 percent during 2005-2008. The drop was due to decreases in the number of people with ideal body mass index, blood pressure, glucose or

cholesterol levels.

- People whose health scores changed by at least 15 percent (for example, dropping from an ideal status on a health metric to intermediate or poor status) had 1.6-times higher odds of being diagnosed with a precursor of cardiovascular disease and a 1.2-times higher rate of being diagnosed with cardiovascular disease, compared to those who kept their health scores high for the majority of the health metrics.

Researchers said their findings emphasize the importance of maintaining ideal cardiovascular health scores over a lifetime.

Provided by American Heart Association

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