

Know your heart's numbers

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(HealthDay)—More than two-thirds of Americans fret about heart disease, but few know the specific information that can help them boost their heart health, a new survey finds.

"Studies have suggested the majority of [coronary artery disease](#) events can be prevented by addressing treatable risk factors," said Dr. Steve Nissen, chair of cardiovascular medicine at the Cleveland Clinic.

"That means, a little knowledge regarding your 'numbers' could go a long way to helping keep your heart healthy and avoiding future problems," he added in a clinic news release.

Treatable risk factors for heart disease include [blood pressure](#), cholesterol, [body mass index](#) (BMI - an estimate of body fat based on height and weight), [waist circumference](#), blood sugar and weight.

The telephone survey of just over 1,000 adults, aged 18 and older, found that 68 percent were worried about heart disease. But only 18 percent knew their BMI, and only 23 percent knew a BMI of 25 or more is considered overweight.

Only 38 percent of those surveyed knew their own blood pressure. Just 4 in 10 knew a healthy blood pressure reading is less than 120/80 mm/Hg.

Just one in four respondents knew that HDL is the "good" cholesterol. Slightly more than half knew that knowing their level of "bad" LDL cholesterol is important to assess their risk of heart disease. Just 12 percent knew they should start getting screened for cholesterol at ages 18 to 24, the study revealed.

Only about one-third of respondents knew that fat in the stomach region is most dangerous for [heart health](#). Just 36 percent knew that waist circumference is important measure of [heart disease risk](#).

The survey also found that 73 percent of respondents didn't know that [heart disease](#) is the leading cause of death for people with diabetes.

Even though there is no evidence that supplements improve heart health, 67 percent of respondents said they took supplements such as multivitamins, fish oil, B vitamins, omega 3s and magnesium in the belief it would benefit their heart.

"Heart disease causes 1 in every 4 deaths in the United States, so it's troubling that so few Americans know the basics about their own heart health," Nissen said. "Americans could take better control of their health by simply educating themselves about what factors are most important to their health."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [heart disease prevention](#).

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