

5 numbers

YOU NEED TO KNOW BY HEART

Pass codes, phone numbers, social security numbers, clothing sizes and addresses. We all have a lot of numbers in our heads, but heart experts at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center say there are 5 more numbers you need to know. These are the numbers your doctor will use to assess your risk for getting heart disease.

1. **Blood pressure.** This is the force of blood against the walls of the arteries. It's measured as two numbers—the systolic pressure, as the heart beats, over the diastolic pressure, as the heart relaxes between beats. A normal blood pressure is under 120/80. Talk to your doctor if it is higher than that. Simple lifestyle changes can help you lower your blood pressure and potentially avoid taking medication.
2. **BMI.** This measures your weight for your body surface area. It is used as a reliable indicator of body fatness for most people. Use an online calculator to assess your risk. Search for "BMI" at www.nhlbi.nih.gov.
3. **Waist circumference.** Fat that is carried around the abdomen increases the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Measure your waist at the belly button, not where your clothing waistband sits. Women should be less than 35 inches and men should be less than 40 inches at the waist.
4. **Cholesterol.** While the body makes all of the cholesterol it needs, it is also found in animal sources of food. High cholesterol can lead to heart disease and build-up of plaque in the arteries. Know your total cholesterol number and your low-density lipoprotein, or LDL, number. That's the bad cholesterol that can cause problems. A healthy cholesterol number is below 200. A healthy LDL number is below 130, 100, or 70 depending on your heart disease risk.
5. **Blood sugar.** This reading tells doctors how much glucose is in the blood. High levels of blood glucose cause diabetes, which increases the risk for cardiovascular disease. A healthy fasting blood sugar number is under 100 after not eating for 8 hours.

