

## **Heart Disease and Obesity**

In this day and age of fast foods, when every meal you order can be “Super Sized”, the obesity rate is on the incline, increasing one’s chances of developing heart disease. Researchers have noted that the increased body mass index is significantly associated with an increased risk of heart disease and stroke and may be due to cholesterol in a diet. When an unhealthy amount of cholesterol derived from eating animal fats in the diet is carried in the blood, it can accumulate on the artery wall, making the artery increasingly narrow and stiff. This prevents sufficient amount of blood from reaching the heart to keep it healthy. The result may be heart disease. An estimated 52 million Americans are being treated for abnormal cholesterol levels.

Other factors may increase the risk of heart disease and stroke, such as smoking, decreased physical activity, diabetes and high blood pressure. High blood pressure may come with elevated cholesterol and eating excessive amounts of sodium (salt). Sodium increases the body’s ability to accumulate fluid, which results in increase of blood pressure and more strain on the heart and arteries. To eliminate this factor, a sodium-controlled diet might be needed. Lowering one’s intake of sodium may prevent the accumulation of fluid and lower blood pressure. There is hope however; studies have shown that working with a registered dietitian in conjunction with your doctor improves your chances of reducing your cholesterol and risk for heart disease.