

HEALTH & WELLNESS PROGRAMS FOR VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENTS

October 2010

NUTRITION NEWS

Health & Wellness
Series

Health & Wellness in Volunteer Fire & Emergency Services

References:

**US Fire Administration
Health and Wellness Guide
for the Volunteer Fire and
Emergency Services, 2009**
http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_321.pdf

NFPA 1583, 2008 JPRs
8.1.1, 8.1.2

A health risk factor is a characteristic that is present early in life and is associated with an increased risk of developing future disease. A modifiable risk factor is a risk factor that can be minimized by diet, exercise, or personal habits. There are several risk factors for CVD, including nonmodifiable and modifiable ones. The nonmodifiable risk factors include gender, age, race, and family history. Men are more likely to suffer Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) at a younger age than females; thus, being over 45 years is considered a risk factor for males, and being over 55 years is a risk factor for females. Family history is defined as the premature death (before 55 years for males or before 65 years for females) of a parent or sibling from CVD.

Risk Factors That Cannot be Modified

- Age
- Heredity
- Race
- Gender

Risk Factors That Can be Modified

- Cholesterol-lipid fractions
- Cigarette smoking
- Diabetes mellitus
- Hypertension
- Obesity
- Physical inactivity

Modifiable risk factors deserve a great deal of attention because, when they are altered, an individual can influence his or her likelihood of developing CVD. There are six major modifiable risk factors: smoking, hypertension (high blood pressure), hypercholesterolemia (high cholesterol levels), diabetes or impaired glucose tolerance, obesity, and physical activity. The more risk factors that an individual has, the greater the likelihood he or she will suffer from CVD.

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1. Go to the following web site:

http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_321.pdf

2. Read pages 9-14 and lead a discussion on the following modifiable health risk factors.

- a. Smoking
- b. Hypertension
- c. High Cholesterol
- d. Obesity
- e. Diabetes
- f. Physical inactivity

CVD is a major threat to the health and safety of firefighters and EMS personnel. To stay healthy and address the risk factors for developing CVD, first responders should adopt a few healthy lifestyle habits. In short, to reduce the risk of suffering a heart attack or stroke, it is imperative that firefighters:

- Do not smoke;
- Follow a regimen of moderate aerobic exercise; and
- Eat a balanced diet, avoiding excess saturated fats, excess simple sugars, and maintaining normal body weight.