

# Cardiology at Concorde

Specializing in Non-Invasive Cardiology



## What Is My Risk of Having a Heart Attack?

This is a question most of us would rather not think about until a family member or co-worker has a heart attack. When this happens, we start to worry about our personal risk. Sometimes this anxiety leads to an urgent visit to a physician but often times we just worry for a time and then move on to other items on our “to do” lists. If you have some of your basic health information available, getting the answer may be easier than you think.

As a species, we are all at risk for having cholesterol deposit in our arteries. The key issues are how fast it accumulates and whether we can modify our lifestyles to slow the process down. Not everyone who is overweight and eats fried food will have a heart attack. There are some proven techniques for establishing an individual’s risk. These profiles involve a blood pressure and a blood cholesterol test after a 12-hour fast. These numbers can be used to establish your “risk profile”.

The granddaddy of all risk profiles is based on the Framingham Heart Study that examined all the residents and their relatives in the town of Framingham, Massachusetts starting in 1948. Annual examinations documented blood pressure and cholesterol levels and then correlated these with the ongoing development of cardiovascular diseases like heart attack and stroke.

Working backwards from this data, the Framingham researchers created a predictive score of an UNTREATED individual's 10 year risk based on a few facts: AGE, SEX, SYSTOLIC BLOOD PRESSURE, TOTAL CHOLESTEROL, and HDL CHOLESTEROL. Point scores derived from these items establish an estimated risk for heart attack or stroke over the next 10 years of your life expressed as the percentage risk.

Low risk scores are <6% risk for heart attack, intermediate risk 6-20% and high risk individuals are in the over 20% category. What is often overlooked is the idea that any individual's risk can now be **lowered** with the appropriate prescription of diet, exercise and medications. Ask your physician about the items that make up the point score, calculate your risk, and then make an appointment to discuss what treatments are appropriate for you. For certain individuals, therapeutic lifestyle changes (TLC) like a low

fat diet, weight loss, and exercise are the only actions required to lower risk. Use the following link to the National Heart and Lung Institute's Risk Calculator to estimate your risk.

<http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/atp/iii/calculator.asp>

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