

HEALTHY HEART

Within the last 10 years, there have been over 150 line-of-duty deaths due to heart attacks. Is your heart prepared for your next shift?¹

Questions to ask your doctor:

Based on my current age and health, please explain my risk for heart disease and stroke. What can I do to lower my risks?

Is my blood pressure at a healthy level? How often should I have it checked?

Can you explain what blood pressure levels mean and where mine falls?

What does my cholesterol number mean, and is it at a healthy level?

How often should I have my cholesterol levels checked?

What can I do to lower my cholesterol and/or keep it low?

BLOOD PRESSURE LEVELS²

| CATEGORY | SYSTOLIC (higher #) | DIASTOLIC (lower #) |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Normal | Less than 120 | Less than 80 |
| Prehypertension | 120-130 | 80-89 |
| High blood pressure Stage 1 | 140-150 | 90-99 |
| High blood pressure Stage 2 | 160+ | 100+ |
| Hypertensive crisis | 180+ | 110+ |

CHOLESTEROL LEVELS³

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Below 200 mg/dL | Desirable |
| 200-239 mg/dL | Borderline high |
| 240 mg/dL | High |

In both charts the optimal levels are the top numbers listed. When having your blood pressure taken and cholesterol levels tested, make sure that your numbers fall within the optimal ranges, and if not, make sure to ask your doctor how to improve/treat these.

WHY GO TO THE DOCTOR?

A day on the job for a law enforcement officer is far from ordinary. The days are long, shift times can be irregular, and work often involves high-risk, high-stress situations. Because of the nature of the profession, it is important for you to annually visit a physician to ensure that you're physically prepared and mentally sound for the rigors of the job.

"Annual wellness examinations allow early detection and treatment of modifiable risk factors for heart attacks and other conditions"

— Rod Hilvers, MD.*

The current life expectancy of an American is 79 years according to the most current data from the World Bank, but according to recent estimates from some health care practitioners, life expectancy among law enforcement officers declines to 66 years. This shortened life expectancy may be associated with stress, lack of physical fitness, poor diet, irregular shift work throughout a career, and the potential difficulty of transitioning from work to personal life after retirement.

Physicians may not be aware that their law enforcement patients are dealing with unique challenges potentially detrimental to their health, and you may be unaware of how your health is being impacted by the day-to-day aspects of your job.



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*This resource was developed with the assistance of Rana Parker, MPH, RD, Los Angeles Police Department and Rob Hilvers, MD, Emergency Responders Health Center, Boise, Idaho.

¹Officer Down Memorial Page. Retrieved April 23, 2015 from <http://www.odmp.org>.

²American Heart Association. (2015, April 21). Understanding Blood Pressure Readings. Retrieved April 23, 2015 from http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HighBloodPressure/AboutHighBloodPressure/Understanding-Blood-Pressure-Readings_UCM_301764_Article.jsp.

³National Institutes of Health. Cholesterol Levels: What You Need to Know. Retrieved April 23, 2015 from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine/issues/summer12/articles/summer12pg6-7.html>

⁴Compiled with the assistance of the IACP Police Physicians Section.



This pamphlet contains a list of recommended questions to pose to your physician to ensure that you're healthy and ready for the job as a law enforcement officer.



GENERAL HEALTH QUESTIONS

The following is a list of general questions that any patient should ask his or her physician during a physical:

Weight:

What is a healthy, realistic weight for me? _____

What should a healthy diet include? _____

What should be my recommended daily fat, caloric, and cholesterol intake? _____

Based on Age

What medical tests should I be having at my age? _____

Based on my age and overall health, what types of physical activity are appropriate for me? _____

How much daily physical activity is recommended for someone my age? _____

Are there certain activities I should avoid? _____



HEALTH TIP

If you are over the age of 37, you should consider asking your doctors for the following tests:

1. An exercise treadmill test to examine heart health
2. Coronary calcium scan to test for Coronary Artery Disease (CAD)
3. Advanced lipid panel test to examine cholesterol levels

JOB-RELATED CONSIDERATIONS?

The following have been identified as health considerations for law enforcement officers due to the nature of the profession. Address the following with your doctor:

My job necessitates that I wear heavy equipment on my belt and a bullet-resistant vest for safety purposes:

How can I reduce the potential long-term effects of this added weight on my upper body?

What are some strategies for strengthening my upper/lower body muscles to better support the equipment weight?

Do you have recommendations on how I can improve my posture both on and off the job?

My sleep schedule is often irregular because of my shift hours:

What steps can I take to balance a healthy sleep schedule with the demands of my shift work?

How can I make sure that I am getting quality sleep without the aid of medication?

I find myself snoring; what might be the cause of this, and how can it be treated?

What are the potential long-term risks of regularly working overnight shifts and sleeping during daylight hours?

I am often idle in my vehicle for extended periods of time:

How might extended periods of inactivity impact my health?

Sometimes I find that I eat and drink very little over the course of a shift, and when I do eat, often it's a rushed, unhealthy meal...typically fast food. What are some ways that I could improve on these habits?

Am I at a good fitness level for the demands of my profession?

Do you know of an expert who is knowledgeable about fitness techniques useful to law enforcement?

I often have little energy to work out while off-duty. How can I best retain this energy to ensure I'm getting my exercise?

Family medical history considerations:

How does my family's medical history affect my health?

Does anything about my family's medical history point to potential mental health issues?

What effects can on-the-job stress have on my overall health? And what are some recommended stress management exercises?



HEALTH TIP

As a law enforcement professional, you are at an increased risk of the following serious medical conditions:⁴

- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Respiratory issues
- Diabetes
- Cirrhosis
- Suicide
- Joint and back issues

Notes:

"Remember: early diagnosis and appropriate rehabilitation will help prevent acute injuries from becoming chronic, and minimize risk of costly re-injury"

- Rod Hilvers, MD.

