Table of Contents

What You’ll Learn 2

Heart Health Risks Among Seniors 3

Ways to Encourage Heart-Healthy Habits 4

Heart Medication Management 5
What You’ll Learn

As one’s age increases, so does the risk of a heart condition, which can lead to serious and even disabling consequences in seniors like heart attacks and strokes. Fortunately, there are steps residents can take to reduce their risk of problems, like maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active, and eating a good diet. Learn the top ways your community can help individuals adopt heart-healthy behaviors for a better quality of life in this ebook.
Heart Health Risks Among Seniors

Aging results in normal changes in the heart and blood vessels such as a weakened heart muscle or stiffness in the large arteries. Over time, these effects that may lead to conditions that, if left untreated, can have significant health consequences that result in hospital stays, disability, or even death. Among the most common cardiovascular risks that increase with age are:

- Angina and heart attack
- Arrhythmias
- Heart and valve disease
- Heart failure
- High blood pressure
- Stroke

Adults are living longer, and preventing these conditions is essential to preserving their functional capacity and well-being. Fortunately, heart problems do not have to be an inevitable part of getting older, and communities can play a key role in helping seniors prevent them.

About 40% of people hospitalized for heart attacks and related problems are ages 75 or older.  
Source: Harvard Medical School

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women 65 or older, accounting for 1 in every 4 deaths.  
Source: CDC

Nearly 75% of all strokes occur in people over age 65.  
Source: CDC
Ways to Encourage Heart-Healthy Habits

While aging causes changes in the heart and blood vessels that can lead to problems, elders can manage their risk by altering their lifestyles. Communities can further their efforts by providing support for residents’ heart-healthy ways. Top opportunities to aid seniors include:

1. **Exercise Programs**: Being physically active is the best way to prevent heart issues so offer ample opportunities for residents to get moving like Tai Chi, dancing, or gardening on site or outings such as bowling. If residents have issues that make exercise challenging, promote modified programs.

2. **Dietary Changes**: Salt increases blood pressure so reducing its intake is important for anyone with elevated levels. Added sugar and diets high in trans and saturated fats also contribute to heart disease risks, making it important for dining services to offer a heart-healthy diet with plenty of options like salmon, nuts, and olive oil.

3. **Smoking Cessation**: Tobacco smoking is a leading cause of cardiovascular disease mortality and morbidity. To help seniors quit, offer programs that will encourage them to give up the habit. And review your smoking policy. While state law varies on prohibiting smoking in assisted living residences, even communities who are not required can implement smoke-free housing environments.

4. **Weight Loss**: Carrying excess body fat can strain the heart and put residents at a greater risk of heart disease. Help residents maintain a healthy weight by with appropriate food options and portion sizes and options for physical activity. You may also want to consider offering regular consultations with registered dieticians.

5. **Manage Conditions**: For many elders, their heart problems are caused by other conditions associated with aging such as diabetes, which puts patients at very high risk for developing cardiovascular disease. Encourage residents to follow their doctor’s treatment plan for managing their chronic conditions and embrace self-care behaviors like diet, exercise and prescription medication adherence to control their risk.

Those with diabetes are 2x more likely to have heart disease or a stroke.

*Source: CDC*
Sometimes, even lifestyle changes are not enough to reduce the risk of heart conditions. In these cases, medication may be prescribed. For instance, when a resident’s blood pressure or cholesterol is above a healthy range, a prescription drug may be needed to lower the levels. Other times, a resident may have heart disease or congestive heart failure, requiring cardiovascular drugs like ACE inhibitors and beta blockers.

When residents take medications for cardiac issues, a community’s pharmacy partner can provide comprehensive medication management to simplify administration, improve adherence, and reduce errors. While many seniors opt for assist living communities because of the freedom and independence they afford, a growing number of residents need assistance managing their medications. In these cases, the relationship with one pharmacy is particularly valuable to communities by providing:

- Support for billing issues
- Drug regimen review
- Timely delivery to promote adherence
- Information on potential adverse reactions or polypharmacy issues
- Documentation and other activities that support compliance
- Compliance packaging
- Staff education
As a long-term care pharmacy that specializes in assisted living, PharMerica can help communities support residents’ heart health with better cardiac medication management to improve their lives. Contact us at Info@pharmerica.com or 855-637-1755 to learn more.