

# “Runs in the family” is not a diagnosis.

If heart disease or stroke run in your family, a genetic cholesterol disorder may be the cause.



Real family living with FH and high Lp(a)

## Does Heart Disease Run in My Family?

Many of us have been told that heart disease or stroke runs in our family, but that is not a diagnosis. Hidden causes of early heart disease, like genetic cholesterol disorders, are very common. But they are frequently missed, leaving entire families at high risk of early heart disease, and even death.

A first step to understanding if you have a genetic condition is to have a conversation with your family and answer the five questions below. This could also help you save more family members from heart disease or stroke.

### Family History Checklist

- 1) **Has anyone in our family experienced an early heart attack or stroke (before age 55 in men or before age 60 in women)?**  
 Yes    No    Don't Know   If yes:    Mom's Side    Dad's Side    Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) **Has anyone in our family had an early stent or bypass surgery or aortic valve replacement?**  
 Yes    No    Don't Know   If yes:    Mom's Side    Dad's Side    Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) **Has anyone in our family been diagnosed with blockages in the arteries of their heart (coronary artery), or their neck (carotid artery), or their legs (peripheral artery)?**  
 Yes    No    Don't Know   If yes:    Mom's Side    Dad's Side    Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) **Have we lost a family member to any of the above?**  
 Yes    No    Don't Know   If yes:    Mom's Side    Dad's Side    Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) **Has anyone in the family been diagnosed with high cholesterol\* or high Lipoprotein(a)\*\*?**  
 Yes    No    Don't Know   If yes:    Mom's Side    Dad's Side    Other \_\_\_\_\_

\* LDL cholesterol greater than 160 mg/dL in children and LDL cholesterol greater than 190 mg/dL in adults

\*\* Lipoprotein(a) levels greater than 50 mg/dL or 125 nmol/L

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions you deserve to know why heart disease or stroke runs in your family. Take our Doctor Discussion Guide to your next appointment and **visit [morefamiliesmorehearts.org](https://morefamiliesmorehearts.org) to learn more.**

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## Doctor Discussion Guide

- 1) **Share your family history of cardiovascular disease with your doctor.**
- 2) **Find out what your cholesterol levels are.\***  
Total Cholesterol \_\_\_\_\_ LDL \_\_\_\_\_ HDL \_\_\_\_\_ Triglycerides \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) **If your LDL cholesterol level is above 190 mg/dL and you have a family history of cardiovascular disease, discuss the possibility of having Familial Hypercholesterolemia.**
- 4) **Find out what your Lipoprotein(a) level is. If you have not had your Lipoprotein(a) checked yet, you can request this simple blood test.\***  
Lipoprotein(a) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) **Make sure your physician isn't basing your risk on an ASCVD calculator if you have a genetic lipid disorder. The ASCVD Risk calculator does not apply if your LDL is over 190 mg/dL, which is considered “severe hypercholesterolemia” and may indicate Familial Hypercholesterolemia.**
- 6) **Discuss what can be done to lower your risk of early heart disease or stroke.**

*\*Visit [www.familyheart.org/lipid-testing](http://www.familyheart.org/lipid-testing) to understand your lab results.*

### Did you know?

Familial Hypercholesterolemia (FH) and high Lipoprotein(a) are two common genetic disorders that can cause premature heart disease or stroke.

Most people with FH are not diagnosed and very few people have their Lipoprotein(a) checked.

A simple blood test and a family history can indicate if a person has FH, high Lipoprotein(a), or both.

If a person has FH and/or high Lipoprotein(a), it is important to tell other family members so they can get checked too.

There are safe and effective treatments available to lower risk for heart disease and stroke.

The Family Heart Foundation is committed to saving more generations of families from heart disease. **To learn more, visit [morefamiliesmorehearts.org](http://morefamiliesmorehearts.org).**