Reducing the Risk of Heart Attack

Q My mom is only 50, and she just had a heart attack. We are concerned because she seemed very healthy. My brother and I are 27 and 24, respectively. Does this mean we are at risk ourselves?

A This is a good question and one you need to ask your doctor to determine for you. The *British Medical Journal* reported in their September 8, 2007, issue that evaluation of family members could pay dividends.

In a study of 130,000 families, those having one or more family members with documented heart disease accounted for 70 percent of the study participants who experienced early onset heart attacks and 80 percent of premature strokes. They represented only 14 percent of the general population, however. This means that family predisposition to heart disease is a serious matter. The researchers estimated that up to 50 percent of the predicted heart attacks could have been prevented by appropriate intervention.

The first evaluation by your doctor will be of your current indicators of risk. What are your cholesterol levels, your weight, blood pressure, and lifestyle practices? Do you exercise? How much fat and what proportion of saturated fat are in your diet? Do you eat sufficient nuts and omega-3 fatty acids?

Although your mom will probably be on medication, the best thing she could do is go through a cardiac rehabilitation program. The *Harvard Heart Letter* recommends that if a patient has had a heart attack, undergone angioplasty, had bypass surgery or a valve replacement, received a heart transplant, or has stable angina, they should undergo cardiac rehabilitation. Insurance companies will usually cover the cost of such a program.

The lifestyle promoted by Adventist Health Ministries will also reduce the risk of heart attack. But it’s only you who can choose to do the right thing.

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While this column is provided as a service to our readers, Drs. Landless and
Handysides unfortunately cannot enter into personal and private communication with our readers. We recommend that you consult with your personal physician on all matters of your health.