

VASCULAR HEALTH SCREENING CAN SAVE PEOPLE'S LIVES



"It's exciting to know that our program discovers problems in people before they have a heart attack," says Dr. James Stein, Co-Director of UW Health Heart and Vascular Care Preventive Cardiology.

What is vascular health screening?

Vascular health screening at UW Health involves a unique test that is recommended by the American Heart Association. This test provides patients with a benchmark of their heart and vascular risk and counseling to improve their health.

Who should participate in this program?

This program is for people age 40 to 70 years old without known heart disease. Vascular health screening improves assessment of cardiovascular risk, particularly in individuals who have:

- family history of heart disease
- cholesterol disorders
- high blood pressure
- diabetes mellitus
- or who smoke cigarettes

If you are interested in better understanding your risk using vascular health screening, talk with your primary physician. Your physician must order the vascular health screening tests for you, and can do so by calling (608) 263-7420.

Interpreting the test

Completing the test will take less than one hour. After you have completed the test, a private session will be scheduled with a cardiovascular nurse specialist who is an expert on cardiovascular risk assessment and personalized counseling.

Using the results of the vascular health screening test, a cardiovascular nurse specialist will provide expert, personalized guidance concerning exercise, diet, smoking cessation, and control of your risk factors for heart and blood vessel disease.

In addition to the vascular screening test results, your body mass index, cholesterol and blood sugar levels are used in your 45-minute counseling session. Please have your fasting cholesterol and blood sugar levels measured in advance of your counseling session.

In the first year of testing, 70 percent of patients were found to be at higher risk for stroke or heart disease than predicted by other screening tests.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING VASCULAR HEALTH SCREENING?



Measurement of carotid artery intima-media thickness (CIMT) and carotid plaque detection

During this safe, non-invasive test, you lie flat on a bed for 30 to 40 minutes. A small amount of gel is applied to your neck and sound beams are used to look at the thickness of your carotid arteries. This is called a high-resolution carotid ultrasound and is recommended by the American Heart Association for appropriate patients.

The carotid arteries supply blood to your brain. As the walls of the carotid artery become thicker, your risk of having a heart attack or stroke increases. Ultrasound of your carotid arteries provides a "window" to see how much blood vessel damage you already have in many vessels in your body including your coronary or "heart" arteries. This is not a simple carotid duplex ultrasound scan to find blockages—it involves sophisticated scanning and measurement techniques that in the Midwest, were pioneered by UW Health Heart and Vascular Care.

How does UW Health's Vascular Health Screening Program compare to a heart scan?

CIMT measurement and carotid plaque detection offer several advantages over electron beam or multidetector computed tomography (EBCT or MDCT), commonly called "heart scans." CIMT does not involve exposure to radiation, is less-expensive than a heart scan and is a proven predictor of cardiovascular risk. Because the screening tests used by UW Health are proven predictors of cardiovascular risk, they are recommended by the American Heart Association.

Although heart scans may be useful in some patients, there is very little data supporting their use in individuals under 50 years old, in women, and in non-whites. Heart scans also do not predict the risk of stroke. Only ultrasound CIMT and carotid plaque detection predict the risk of heart disease and stroke, and both men and women across a wide range of ages, as well as in different ethnic groups.

Detailed analysis and measurement of carotid ultrasound images provide a far more complete and accurate picture of the cardiovascular system than other more commonly available cardiac screening methods.

How much does the screening cost?

Many insurance companies provide coverage when qualifying patients are referred by their primary care physician. Please check with your doctor or health insurance provider. If not covered, payment for all charges related to the Vascular Health Screening Program must be made prior to testing. The charge is \$295. A report of the tests and risk assessment session will be sent to your ordering physician. You will get a copy of the report at the time of your personalized counseling session.

For more information

If you have any questions about the Vascular Health Screening Program, please call us at (608) 263-7420 or visit our Web site at: uwhealth.org/heartandvascular.

UWHealth
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Do you know your risk for heart disease?



Vascular Health Screening

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