

Couples share heart disease risk factors and behaviors

October 26 2020



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Risk factors for heart health, such as smoking, unhealthy diets and minimal physical activity, may seem personal, but for people who are married or in a domestic partnership, the behavior patterns of one person

may be strongly linked to the patterns of the other. A new study led by investigators from Brigham and Women's Hospital assessed cardiovascular risk factors and behaviors of more than 5,000 couples who took part in an employee wellness program offered by Quest Diagnostics. The team used several metrics to classify people as having ideal or non-ideal risk factors and behaviors, finding that in 79 percent of couples, both people fell into the non-ideal category for cardiovascular health, with most sharing unhealthy diets and getting inadequate exercise. The findings point out the potential importance of addressing healthy behaviors for both people in a relationship. Results are published in *JAMA Network Open*.

"We know a lot about [cardiovascular risk factors](#) for individuals but not for couples," said corresponding author Samia Mora, MD, MHS, of the Brigham Divisions of Preventive Medicine and Cardiovascular Medicine. "We expected to see some shared risk factors, but it was a surprise to see that the vast majority of couples were in a non-ideal category for overall [cardiovascular health](#)."

Mora and colleagues examined data from Quest Diagnostics, which offered a voluntary health assessment program to its employees. Researchers analyzed data from 5,364 couples (10,728 individuals) who joined the program between October 2014 and August 2015. The researchers determined whether each individual was in the ideal, intermediate, or poor category for each of the American Heart Association-defined Life's Simple 7 (LS7) risk factors and behaviors. The LS7 include smoking status, body mass index, [physical activity](#), healthy diet score, total cholesterol, blood pressure and fasting glucose. The team also gave each participant an overall cardiovascular (CV) health score. Data were collected from questionnaires, examinations and [laboratory tests](#).

When examined individually, more than half of the participants were in

the ideal category for three LS7 risk factors and behaviors: smoking status (never smoked), total cholesterol (

Citation: Couples share heart disease risk factors and behaviors (2020, October 26) retrieved 4 February 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-10-couples-heart-disease-factors-behaviors.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.