

## Preventing Illness

Answer the questions below. After you read the text, look at your answers to see if you are at risk for heart disease.

### *Are you at risk?*

1. Are you male?
2. Do you smoke?
3. Are you overweight?
4. Are you a competitive person? Do you always want to win or be the best at everything?
5. Do you often feel that you never have enough time to do all the things you want or have to?
6. Do you hide what you are feeling?

### **Skimming for main ideas**

Skimming means reading only small parts of a text, such as the beginnings and ends of paragraphs, in order to get an overview of the organization of the text and its main ideas.

Skim through the text and find the paragraph that deals with each of the following topics.

Write the number of the paragraph in the blank.

- \_\_\_ causes of heart disease
- \_\_\_ programmes to help Type A personalities relax more
- \_\_\_ differences between Type A and Type B personalities
- \_\_\_ statistics about the death rate from heart disease
- \_\_\_ reasons why Type A personalities are more susceptible to heart disease
- \_\_\_ differences in heart disease rate for men and women

## **HEART DISEASE**

1 Heart disease is Western society's number-one killer. It accounts for one-third of all deaths in America and for well over half the deaths among middle-age men. Heart disease was relatively rare in America at the turn of the century, but it has risen dramatically since then, with a slight downturn since 1960. Heart disease is often viewed as a disease of modern living, spurred on by the habits and the stress of industrialized society. Evidence for this idea comes from the fact that non-Western societies have relatively low rates of heart disease. And there is a higher rate of heart disease among immigrants to America, such as Japanese-Americans and Chinese-Americans, than among those who remain in their native country, suggesting that something about the Western environment promotes the development of the disease (Shapiro, 1983)

2 Heart disease usually involves the formation of a fatty substance called *plaque* in the walls of the coronary arteries that supply blood to the heart. If the arteries become narrowed enough or blocked, the person may suffer a heart attack (death of a region of heart muscle tissue). Among the many factors that have been found to be related to the risk of developing heart disease are high blood pressure (or *hypertension*), a history of heart disease among one's close relatives, cigarette smoking, being relatively overweight, and a high level of cholesterol in the blood. In addition, it is now clear that stress can have a major impact on the development of heart disease. People who continually undergo a great deal of stress – and who lack the ability to control it – are at a significantly greater risk for heart disease than people who undergo less stress or who can manage it successfully.

3 Whereas some jobs may make heavier psychological demands than others, certain sorts of people, regardless of their occupation, seem to make heavy psychological demands on themselves. People with a particular personality style commonly labeled Type A have been found to be especially susceptible to heart disease. They are competitive and aggressive. They are always trying to do more and more in less and less time. People who have an opposite sort of personality are termed Type B. Others are categorized somewhere in between.

4 Many studies have confirmed that Type A people are more susceptible to heart disease than Type B people. One probable reason is that Type A people tend to make greater demands on themselves and expose themselves to more stressful situations than do Type B people. One study of college football players found, for example, that Type A players were rated by their coaches as playing harder than Type B players when they were injured. Type A people also tend to have an unusually intense psychological reactions to the stress that they encounter. When they are faced with a challenging situation, they manifest higher blood pressure and greater increases in heart rate than Type B people. Some researchers believe that this greater physiological reactivity under stress is the key to the link between the Type A pattern and heart disease.

5 Most of the research on psychological factors in heart disease has focused on men rather than women. Even among women who face highly stressful situations, the risk of heart disease remains considerably lower than for men. Many biological and psychological factors may contribute to this difference. Among them is the finding that although women tend to express their emotions more openly than men do, their physiological reactions to stress tend to be less intense. In terms of the risk of heart disease, then, it may be better to let one's emotions show outwardly than to bury them inside, where they may eventually cause damage to one's body.

6 Because of the links between the Type A behaviour pattern and heart disease, various approaches have been taken to changing this pattern behaviour. Type A people have been taught relaxation exercises and other techniques to manage stress. They have been encouraged to develop nonstressful hobbies and they have been given therapy sessions to help change their pressured view of the world. Some programs have had a degree of success in altering the behavioral and psychological reactions of Type A individuals. So far, however, the success has been limited. The Type A pattern seems to be learned over the course of many years, and it is supported by the competitive, achievement-oriented aspects of Western society. As such, it is not a simple matter to change this pattern. Indeed, as Joan Borysenko (1984) notes, "One of the most stressful things for a Type A is to be told to relax".

### **After you read**

Decide if the following statements are true or false, according to the information in this text.

- 1\_\_ More than fifty percent of all deaths in the USA are from heart disease.
- 2\_\_ When people emigrate to the USA from non-Western countries, they are more likely to suffer from heart disease than if they had stayed in their original homelands.
- 3\_\_ If one's close relatives have had heart disease, this is a possible indication that you may eventually suffer from heart disease.
- 4\_\_ Research has established that for some people there is a relationship between the degree of stress in their life and the risk of developing heart disease.
- 5\_\_ Two men doing the same job are equally likely to develop heart disease.
- 6\_\_ Type A people tend to have aggressive and unrelaxed personalities; however, they are better able to manage stress effectively and are less likely to develop heart disease than Type B people.
- 7\_\_ Only one research has ever found that type A people are more susceptible to heart disease than Type B people.
- 8\_\_ When type A people experience stress, they tend to have a higher heart rate and higher blood pressure than Type B people.
- 9\_\_ When a Type A man and a Type B woman do the same job and receive the same amount of stress, they have an equal chance of developing heart disease.
- 10\_\_ Most programs trying to change the behaviour of type A people have not been very successful.

(Adapted from Seal, B: Academic Encounters, 1997)

## Vocabulary

Translate the following phrases:

1. *It accounts for one-third of all deaths...*
2. *...many factors that have been found to be related to the risk of developing heart disease*
3. *...certain sorts of people, regardless of their occupation, seem to make...*
4. *Many studies have confirmed that...*
5. *...psychological factors may contribute to this...*
6. *In terms of the risk of heart disease,...*
7. *...various approaches have been taken...*

## Comparing and Contrasting

Look at these phrases which can be used when comparing things. Decide which of them are more useful in writing than in conversation.

### DESCRIBING SIMILARITIES

... (A)... is very like          is similar to          is identical to          is much the same as  
is comparable to          is equivalent to          reminds me of          seems like  
corresponds to          has a lot in common with          ...(B)...

### DESCRIBING DIFFERENCES

... (B)... is very unlike          is quite different from          isn't the same as  
differs from          stands out as          has very little in common with          ...(C)...

On the other hand,...          In contrast, ...          While....

Make comparisons between Type A and Type B people in terms of each of the categories listed.

1. the psychological demands they make upon themselves
2. their risk of having high blood pressure
3. their heart disease rate
4. their sense of time urgency
5. their reaction to difficult situations

Write a paragraph contrasting Type A personality types with Type B personality types.