

Your Heart May Be Older Than You!

A new “heart age” calculator found that most adults have a heart older than their chronological age, particularly Latino and Black adults.

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Most U.S. adults have a [heart](#) that is biologically older than their chronological age, increasing their risk for [heart attacks](#) and [strokes](#), according to a new study led by Northwestern Medicine researchers.

For the study, published in [JAMA Cardiology](#), researchers created a [free online tool](#) that calculates a person’s “heart age” based on [blood pressure](#), [cholesterol](#) levels, age, sex and whether a person [smokes](#) or has [diabetes](#).

While traditional heart disease [risk](#) has been calculated as a percentage, the new calculator reframes that risk as a more understandable age.

The calculator is based on the [American Heart Association’s PREVENT equation](#), which provides risk estimates for cardiovascular disease, heart failure, stroke and more.

“Even though many people in their thirties or forties may feel ‘too young’ to worry about their risk for heart disease, we know that risk can often be silent until it is too late,” said senior study author Sadiya Khan, MD, a cardiologist and associate professor at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, in a university news release.

Khan and her team tested the new calculator on more than 14,000 U.S. adults ages 30 to 79 with no history of cardiovascular disease.

On average, women had a heart age of 55.4 compared with a chronological age of 51.3. For men, the average heart age was 56.7 compared with an average chronological age of 49.7.

What's more, the discrepancy between heart and chronological age was significantly bigger among Black and Latino adults involved in the study.

For example, Black men had a heart age 8.5 years older than their actual age, compared with 7.9 years for Latino men, 6.7 years for Asian men and 6.4 years for white men. Among women, the gaps were 6.2 years for Black women, 4.8 for Latino women, 3.7 years for white women and 2.8 years for Asian women.

Additionally, 23% of women and 32% of men without education beyond high school had a heart age at least a decade older than their chronological age.

"Many people who should be on medicine to lower their risk for heart attack, stroke or heart failure are not on these medications. We hope this new heart age calculator will help support discussions about prevention and ultimately improve health for all people," Khan said.

Researchers plan to study whether this new way of presenting risk improves outcomes and helps people better understand their need for preventive interventions.

"The important thing is that we have very good options available in our toolbox to help slow that aging down if we can identify it," Khan said. "This may be even more important in younger people who don't often think about their risk for heart disease."