

## Aging Baby Boomers May Swamp Cardiac Care

'Diabesity' renders them more prone to heart attacks than their predecessors, researchers say



**THURSDAY, March 12 (HealthDay News) -- Baby boomers are not in good shape, even when compared with their counterparts 10 or 20 years ago**, researchers warn. According to a new study, more aging boomers are being hospitalized for heart attacks now than people their age were a generation ago, and the increase in cases could place a big burden on cardiac care wards nationwide.

But on the upside, improvements in medical care may allow more people from this generation to recover and leave the hospital after a heart attack, the researchers say.

"The first baby boomers will begin turning 65 in a year-and-a-half, making the aging of this group an important public health issue," said Hylan Shoob, lead author of a study presented at an American Heart Association conference. She added that the **"early identification and treatment of risk factors for acute myocardial infarction [heart attack], including high blood pressure, cholesterol, obesity and diabetes, may reduce future health-care demands by this population."**

The 80 million baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964 now constitute a third of the U.S. population, raising the specter of more disease and more costs for the health-care system.

Born into relative affluence and peace after World War II, "this baby boomer population represents a huge volume of the population," said Dr. Carl J. Lavie. "In addition, unlike their parents, this population has largely enjoyed the 'good life,' with a lot of surpluses that have allowed them to avoid high amounts of physical work in their workplaces and large quantities of good-tasting, high-caloric, high-fat, high-processed, sugary foods." The combination has led to more "diabesity" -- or obesity plus diabetes, both strong risk factors for heart disease. "There is no question that the medical costs that will be required to treat these man-made diseases will place a major burden on our already troubled health-care systems."

In the study, researchers compared hospitalization rates for heart attacks among people who were 45 to 64 years of age in 1980, in 1990 and in 2000. They found:

- The number of 45- to 64-year-olds hospitalized for heart attacks was highest in 2000, but the prevalence (in essence, the percentage of that population) was highest in 1990, followed by 2000 and 1980.
- More men than women were hospitalized for the condition in 1980, but the situation had flipped by 2000, with more women than men hospitalized.
- More cardiac catheterization and cardiac revascularization procedures, such as angioplasty, were performed as the years progressed, with 2000 seeing the most such operations.
- More people were discharged to their homes in 1980 than in 1990 or 2000. More people were discharged to facilities such as nursing homes in 1990 and 1980.
- People today die less often while in the hospital than people did 10 or 20 years ago.

"I can confidently predict that the risk [for heart disease and related conditions] is increasing," Lavie said. "There was a study in the past year that showed that younger people are now having heart attacks and this is directly related with premature obesity."

#### **More information**

The American Heart Association has more on [preventing heart attacks](#).

