

A portrait of Dr. Philip Nimoityn, M.D., a middle-aged man with short brown hair, smiling warmly. He is wearing a white lab coat over a white collared shirt and a blue patterned tie. The lab coat has the Jefferson University logo on the left chest and his name and title on the right chest. The background is a plain, light gray.

Influential *PHILADELPHIANS* in Medicine



Philip Nimoityn, M.D.

Despite a wealth of research and resources about heart health, cardiovascular disease is still the leading cause of death and disability worldwide. Dr. Philip Nimoityn of Cardiology Consultants of Philadelphia shares the preventative measures that you can take starting today to improve your quality of life.



A PET/CT scanner at Cardiology Consultants of Philadelphia, state-of-the-art technology utilized for cardiac stress test imaging and for coronary artery calcium score determination to predict future risk of a heart attack.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and disability worldwide, and its monumental human and economic toll makes prevention imperative. Strokes are increasing significantly with approximately 90% being preventable by simply reducing risk factors.

Cardiovascular health is experiencing a paradigm shift toward prevention rather than waiting for disease to occur. Emphasis needs to be placed on correcting modifiable risk factors such as poor diet, obesity, high blood pressure, hyperlipidemia (high cholesterol and other lipids), elevated blood sugar and diabetes, smoking and lack of exercise.

Identifying and reducing cardiovascular risk has been hampered by a lack of adequate professional guidance and reluctance of individuals to comply with preventive guidance. The latest statistics are alarming. Less than 25% of individuals with high blood pressure are adequately controlled. Blood pressure is even less controlled among African Americans, who are disproportionately affected by adverse outcomes such as stroke. The majority of individuals with atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease have not achieved the recommended levels for LDL-cholesterol ("bad cholesterol") and a substantial percentage are not even taking a statin, the cornerstone of cholesterol-lowering drugs. People with diabetes are at significantly increased risk for coronary artery disease, but a significant number are not taking the recommended statin drugs which decrease risk. Although smoking has decreased in recent years, physical inactivity and obesity are increasing across the nation, and obesity is projected to result in 25% of current adolescents becoming diabetic by adulthood.

Individuals should prioritize seeking an assessment of their cardiovascular health. It should begin with a review of any family or personal history of cardiovascular disease, any symptoms, and an assessment of lifestyle including physical activity and nutrition, a physical examination, electrocardiogram (EKG), and laboratory studies. These usually include a lipid panel, a chemistry panel, and a fasting glucose. They often also include cardio C-reactive protein, which is a marker for vascular inflammation, and lipoprotein(a), which is a genetically determined factor that significantly increases cardiovascular risk. Other testing could include an echocardiogram, stress test or outpatient telemetry monitor. A coronary artery calcium score (CAC score) can significantly increase the predictability of developing coronary artery disease and a future coronary event.

The risk of cardiovascular disease can be significantly decreased with proper screening, lifestyle modifications and drug therapy. The future could hold even greater promise if the currently available preventive measures are targeted to younger individuals, especially in families already identified to be at increased risk. The longer the preventive measures are in place, the greater the proven ability to improve both length and quality of life.

Philip Nimoityn, MD, FACC, is a clinical cardiologist at Cardiology Consultants of Philadelphia at Jefferson. He is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine at Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University and an Attending Physician at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, where he has held numerous leadership positions including President of the Medical Staff. He is a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology.