SMOHIT Body Maintenance
Toolbox Talks for the Sheet Metal Industry

Factors that Contribute to Atherosclerosis

- Your chances of developing atherosclerosis increase with the number of risk factors you have.

- **Major Risk Factors:**
  - Unhealthy blood cholesterol levels
  - High blood pressure (at or above 140/90 mmHg for extended periods of time)
  - Smoking (can damage and tighten blood vessels, raise cholesterol levels and raise blood pressure)
  - Insulin resistance
  - Diabetes
  - Overweight or obesity
  - Lack of physical activity (adversely affects cholesterol levels, blood pressure, diabetes, and body weight)
  - Unhealthy diet (foods high in saturated and trans fats, triglycerides, cholesterol, sodium (salt), and sugar can worsen other atherosclerosis risk factors)
  - Age
  - Family history of early heart disease

- **Other Risk Factors:**
  - Sleep apnea (disorder where you experience pauses in breathing or shallow breaths while you sleep)
    - Untreated sleep apnea can raise your chances of having high blood pressure, diabetes, and even a heart attack or stroke.
  - Stress
    - Research shows that the most commonly reported "trigger" for a heart attack is an emotionally upsetting event, particularly one that involves anger.
  - Alcohol
    - Heavy drinking can damage the heart muscle and worsen other risk factors.

Notes:

Instructor Tips

- **Explain that as you get older your risk of atherosclerosis increases due to genetic and lifestyle factors, which cause plaque to build in your arteries.**

- **Explain that by the time you're middle-aged or older, enough plaque has built up to cause signs or symptoms of atherosclerosis.**

  Note: Signs and symptoms will be discussed in the next toolbox talk.

- **Explain that in men, the risk for atherosclerosis increases after age 45; and in women, the risk increases after age 55.**

Jobsite: _____   Date: _____
Supervisor: _____   G.C. _____

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