



# Heart Disease: Causes, Symptoms, Treatment and Prevention

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## DESCRIPTION

### Heart disease

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a type of disease that affects the heart and blood vessels. CVD includes coronary artery disease (CHD) such as angina and myocardial infarction (commonly known as heart attack). Other cardiovascular diseases include stroke, heart failure, hypertensive heart disease, rheumatic heart disease, cardiomyopathy, abnormal heart rhythms, congenital heart disease, valvular heart disease, carditis, aortic aneurysms, peripheral artery disease, thromboembolic disease, and venous thrombosis.

Among many different types of heart diseases, coronary heart disease (also called coronary artery disease) is the most common type of heart disease, and is the leading cause of death.

### Causes

Heart disease is caused by the accumulation of plaque in the blood vessels that carry blood to the heart (called the coronary arteries). Plaque is a waxy substance composed of fat, cholesterol, calcium and other substances found in the blood. Over time, plaque build-up in the coronary arteries (called atherosclerosis) reduces blood flow to the heart and can cause chest pain (called angina) and heart attacks.

### Risk factors

Some risk factors for heart disease can be modified or controlled by lifestyle changes and medications, but others cannot. Risk factors that can be controlled to prevent or delay heart disease include:

- High blood pressure (also known as hypertension)
- High blood cholesterol levels
- Diabetes
- Eating an unhealthy diet
- A lack of physical activity
- Smoking
- Being overweight or obese
- Stress

### Symptoms

Some people with heart disease may not have any symptoms.

However, some people may experience chest pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, and weakness.

Chest pain that does not go away or that occurs while a person is resting may be a sign of a heart attack.

### Treatment

Treatment of heart disease often involves lifestyle changes. For example, a person with heart disease can change their diet, increase their physical activity to lose weight, or quit smoking.

Medicines and surgery are also used to treat heart disease.

Medicines used to treat heart disease include medicines that are able to lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol, or prevent or relieve chest pain. Some of these medicines can interact with other drugs that a person may be taking.

Coronary artery bypass grafting also known as CABG is the most common type of surgery used to treat heart disease in adults. During CABG, healthy arteries or veins in the body are used to bypass the obstruction of the coronary arteries.

### Prevention

- Maintain a healthy diet.
- Replace saturated fats with healthier alternatives.
- If you are overweight or obese, reduce body fat.
- Limit alcohol consumption to the recommended daily limit. People who drink moderate amounts of alcoholic beverages have a 25-30% reduction in their risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Lower non-HDL cholesterol. Treatment with statins reduces cardiovascular mortality by approximately 31%.
- Moderate exercise for at least 150 minutes per week.
- If blood pressure is rising, lower it. Lowering blood pressure also appears to be effective in the normal blood pressure range.
- Reduce psychosocial stress. This measurement can be complicated by inaccurate definitions of what constitutes a psychosocial intervention. Myocardial ischemia induced by psychological stress is associated with an increased risk of heart problems in individuals who have previously suffered from heart disease.
- Too little sleep also increases your risk of high blood pressure. Adults need about 7-9 hours of sleep.

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