

Your Wellness Matters

# Heart Disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both women and men in the United States, causing about **647,000 deaths annually**, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). That means that **1 in 4 deaths** are caused by heart disease.

## What is heart disease?

Heart disease is a term used to refer to several different types of heart conditions. Out of all the different conditions, coronary artery disease—caused by plaque buildup in the walls of the heart’s arteries—is the most common. Other common forms of heart disease include:

- Heart failure
- Arrhythmia
- Valvular heart disease
- Aortic aneurysms
- Congenital heart defects

Heart disease is often used interchangeably with cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease typically refers to heart conditions that involve blocked or narrowed blood vessels, which can lead to chest pains, stroke and heart attacks.

## What are the symptoms of heart disease?

The symptoms of heart disease can vary, and some people may not even know they have a heart condition until they have a heart attack. Common signs and symptoms of heart disease include shortness of breath, dizziness, chest pain, heart palpitations, weakness and fatigue.

## What are the treatments for heart disease?

Treatment for heart disease will vary on a case-by-case basis. The goals of treatment for heart disease are to relieve symptoms, control or reduce risk factors, stop or slow further damage to the arteries, and prevent and treat cardiac events. Treatment includes several options:

- Self-care and prevention
- Medications
- Procedures to open blocked or narrowed arteries, or to bypass them
- Cardiac rehabilitation

## What are the risks for developing heart disease?

There are certain uncontrollable factors that increase your risk of heart disease, including age, sex and family history. Generally speaking, those with a family history of heart disease, men and older people have a higher risk of developing a heart condition. However, other factors that increase your risk for heart disease, such as stress, inactivity, obesity, diabetes, smoking and a poor diet, are controllable.

## Is heart disease preventable?

In many cases, heart disease can be prevented by living a healthy lifestyle and properly managing health conditions. Here are tips that may help prevent heart disease:

- Refrain from smoking.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Limit your sodium intake.
- Eat a well-balanced, healthy diet.
- Exercise regularly.
- Manage your stress.
- Limit your alcohol intake.

## Where can I learn more?

For more information about heart disease, please contact your doctor.