

HEART DISEASE 101

Everything You Need To Know To
Protect Yourself From The #1 Killer

By the American Institute of Health Care Professionals, Inc.

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Heart Disease: The Silent Killer

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), over 25% of deaths in America are caused by underlying heart disease.

The term “heart disease” is typically a broad term used to describe any medical condition that impacts the functioning of the heart, arteries, or blood vessels. That includes conditions like coronary artery disease and cardiomyopathy.

Heart disease is often referred to as the “silent killer,” as it may ravage the cardiovascular system for months or even years before being diagnosed by a medical professional.



Given the potential severity of heart disease and related conditions, it’s important to understand the signs, causes, risk factors, prevention tactics, and treatment options available to you.

Statistics: America's #1 Killer

To understand just how severe heart disease can be and how common these conditions are in America, it’s important to learn a little bit about the most recent statistics.

Here are some important statistics that all Americans, especially those aged 65 and older, should know.

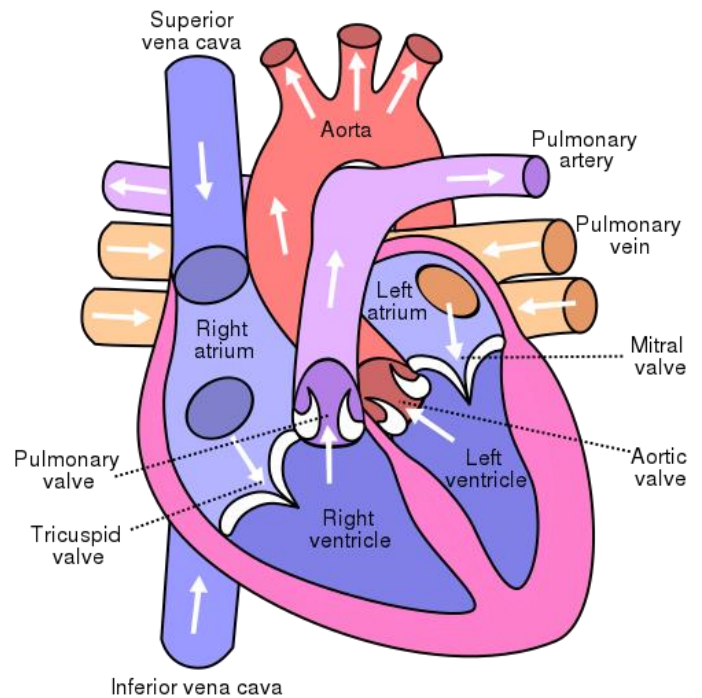
- Heart disease is the #1 cause of death in America (CDC).
- Over 38% of Americans had high cholesterol between 2013 and 2016 (AHA).
- 75% of cases of cardiovascular disease occur in low-income populations (WHO).
- 1 in 19 deaths were caused by a stroke in 2017 (AHA).
- About 20% of heart attacks go undetected (CDC).
- Over 1 billion people worldwide suffered from high blood pressure in 2015 (WHO).
- Death as a result of heart disease is more common in the Southern U.S. (CDC).
- Coronary artery disease affects over 18 million American adults (CDC).
- Up to 3% of strokes cause long-lasting disability for survivors (AHA).
- 1 in 3 Americans has some form of cardiovascular disease (ODPHP).

Though many of the statistics above aren't specifically about heart disease, they are all related to heart disease in a sense. For example, it's known that heart disease increases the risk of having a stroke while having high cholesterol heightens the risk of developing heart disease.

The Function and Anatomy of the Heart

The average human heart will weigh between 9 and 12 ounces and is nestled securely behind the rib cage on the left side of your chest. The heart, along with the rest of the cardiovascular system, is responsible for blood flow throughout the body and the delivery of nutrients through the bloodstream.

The heart is surrounded by a fluid-filled sac known as the pericardium, designed to protect the heart from exterior trauma, friction, and infection. The exterior of the heart also includes nerves that control healthy heart contractions as well as coronary arteries, which are where the heart sources oxygen-rich blood to function properly.



There are four chambers within the heart, each one playing a vital role in the oxygenation and flow of blood throughout the body, according to the [National Cancer Institute](https://www.nationalcancerinstitute.org/). *Image credit: Wapcaplet, Yaddah / CC BY-SA*

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)

How Blood Travels Through The Heart

Here's an overview of how blood travels through the heart.

Blood enters the heart through the right atrium, depleted of oxygen after traveling extensively through the veins within the body. After traveling through the right ventricle, the blood briefly travels through the lungs to become oxygenated once more.

The newly oxygen-rich blood then moves to the left atrium and then the left ventricle, being released to the rest of the body shortly after the fact. As the blood travels through the heart, the valves within the heart ensure that blood flows in a single direction, preventing backflow.

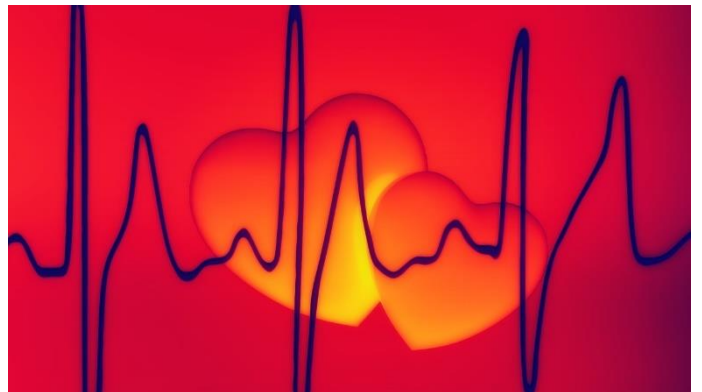
The travel of blood from the heart and then throughout the body takes fewer than 60 seconds.

What Is Heart Disease

Both “heart disease” and “cardiovascular disease” are considered broad terms used to describe medical conditions that affect the heart. The more common heart conditions are further broken down into “types,” though there are no set guidelines regarding how many types of heart disease there actually are.

According to the [Mayo Clinic](#), the major types of heart disease include:

- **Cardiomyopathy:** A condition in which the heart muscle weakens, putting undue pressure on the heart and often leading to heart failure
- **Coronary Artery Disease:** A condition where plaque builds up in the arteries of the heart, narrowing the arteries and reducing overall blood flow
- **Heart Arrhythmias:** A range of conditions characterized by an unusual heart rhythm or unusual heartbeats
- **Heart Failure:** A condition where the heart is unable to supply the body with appropriate blood flow, typically worsening over time
- **Heart Infections:** Any condition in which bacteria or fungi enter the bloodstream and travel to the heart, leading to a heart infection
- **Valvular Heart Disease:** A condition characterized by damage to one or more of the four heart valves, causing a leaky valve or even backflow



Though most types of heart disease aren't fatal on their own, they do increase your risk of developing other serious medical conditions or experiencing a heart attack or stroke. Any symptoms of the above-listed conditions should encourage you to see a medical professional.

Men Versus Women

According to the [Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](#) (ODPHP), about 33% of Americans have at least one cardiovascular disease. Despite these statistics, there are marked differences in the incidence and manifestation of heart disease between men and women.

Here's a brief look at some gender-related data compiled by the [American Heart Association](#).

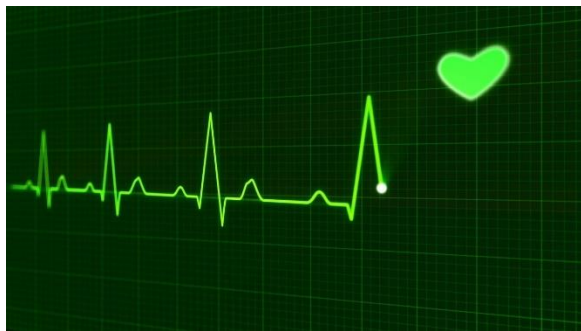
- Women are more likely to be diagnosed with and die of cardiovascular disease.
- Coronary heart disease and heart failure are both more prevalent in men.
- 2 in 3 men will be diagnosed with cardiovascular disease in their lifetime, as compared to 1 in 2 women.
- Women are at significantly higher risk for having a stroke, though the death rate for stroke among men and women is relatively similar.
- Women tend to develop heart disease up to a decade later than men.

There are quite a few potential explanations for the differences between the two genders and the relationship with heart disease.

For example, the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) states that about 16.7% of men smoke tobacco, as compared to just 13.6% of women. Since there's a known connection between smoking cigarettes and incidences of heart disease, that could be a factor that causes the heightened risk in men.

Causes

Heart disease is considered a lifestyle disease, meaning that lifestyle choices such as diet, exercise body weight and even sleep are factors that cause many cases of the disease. According to Heart.org, "Preventing heart disease (and all cardiovascular diseases) means making smart choices now that will pay off the rest of your life. Lack of exercise, a poor diet and other unhealthy habits can take their



toll over the years. Anyone at any age can benefit from simple steps to keep their heart healthy during each decade of life."

One such example is clogged arteries which can cause heart attacks, where an unhealthy and especially high fat diet contributes to clogging of the arteries and in the worst case scenarios, blood is blocked from being pumped in the body resulting in heart attacks.

There's no single definitive cause of heart disease, as there are several different types of heart disease and oftentimes several factors that lead to such a diagnosis. Prevention of heart disease typically comes down to having an understanding of the more common causes.

Here's a look at some of the more common causes of heart disease.

- **Genetic Factors or Birth Defects:** Many heart conditions are considered “congenital,” meaning that you're born with them. These are often referred to as heart defects and are caused by improper development within the womb. Despite the seriousness of heart diseases, many congenital heart defects are not recognized until adulthood ([CDC](#)).
- **High Blood Pressure:** As your blood pressure continues to rise, your heart is put under excess stress to provide blood to your extremities. Most importantly, prolonged hypertension can weaken the heart muscle and reduce the elasticity within your arteries, increasing your risk of heart disease or heart failure ([CDC](#)).
- **Infection:** An infection is the most likely cause of a condition known as endocarditis, known to impact the valves and chambers of the heart. This often results from the entrance of bacteria or fungi into the body, eventually settling in the heart ([Mayo Clinic](#)).
- **Plaque Build-Up:** Many types of heart disease, particularly coronary heart disease (atherosclerosis), are caused by the build-up of plaque, fat, or cholesterol within the blood vessels and arteries. This reduces blood flow throughout the body and greatly increases the risk of a future heart attack or stroke ([MedlinePlus](#)).

Unfortunately, heart disease is a complicated condition and will likely result from the combination of several causes or risk factors over a period of months or even years. The list above is just scraping the surface of potential causes.

Risk Factors

Despite each known heart disease being very different than the next, there are quite a few known risk factors for heart disease as a whole. With that said, recognizing which risk factors apply to you can help you to make lifestyle changes that reduce your overall risk.

Here's a brief look at some of the more common risk factors of heart disease in America.



- **Age:** There's a direct correlation between age and the risk of having a heart attack or developing cardiovascular disease. In particular, prolonged hypertension and high cholesterol drastically increase the risk of these conditions in those aged 65 and older ([National Institute of Aging](#)).
- **Obesity:** There's a proven link between obesity, high cholesterol, excess strain on the heart, and elevated blood pressure. In fact, one study found that even gaining 10kg can increase the risk of developing coronary heart disease by 12% and stroke by up to 24% ([Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved](#)).
- **High Blood Pressure (Hypertension):** Since high blood pressure puts excess strain on the heart to maintain blood flow, it's also linked to elevated risks of developing conditions like heart failure. One study found that about 66% of

those diagnosed with heart failure also had high blood pressure ([American Journal of Medicine](#)).

- **Smoking Cigarettes:** Every cigarette that you smoke is contributing to the narrowing of your blood vessels and arteries, thus impacting blood flow within the body and increasing the risk of blockages. Cigarettes are attributed to about 20% of all heart disease deaths recorded in America ([Cleveland Clinic](#)).

Other factors that could potentially increase your risk of developing heart disease include:

- Alcohol & Drug Use
- Diabetes
- Family History or Genetic Mutations
- Gender (men are more likely than women)
- High LDL Cholesterol
- Lack of Physical Activity
- Excess & Uncontrolled Stress
- Unbalanced Diet (specifically a diet high in fat, cholesterol, and/or sodium)

Though there is plenty of scientific evidence linking each of these risk factors to the prevalence of heart disease, there is no guarantee that each will *definitely* cause heart disease. That risk will depend on the protective factors that you may possess.

How To Reduce Risks For Heart Disease

Reducing the risk of developing heart disease often comes down to understanding and, thus, reducing the risk factors that are relevant to your life. Given the complexity of heart disease and its risk factors, it's a good idea to work on prevention from multiple angles, including:

- **Reduce Unhealthy Dietary Intake:** Cut back on foods high in sugar, saturated fats, sodium, and cholesterol. Refer to the guidelines for each nutrient set forth by the [Food & Drug Administration](#), read nutrition labels before consuming food, and pay close attention to serving sizes.
- **Limit Use of Drugs, Alcohol & Tobacco:** Most drugs will have a negative impact on the heart and cardiovascular system as a whole. To lower your risk of developing heart disease, be sure to drink alcohol in moderation and avoid illegal drugs and tobacco entirely ([National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)).
- **Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Given the heightened risk of heart disease while obese, take measures to maintain or get down to a healthy weight. Refer to the calculator tool created by the [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#) to determine your current Body Mass Index (BMI). Your ideal weight will give you a BMI between 18.5 and 24.9.



- **Cope with Your Stressors:** One of the most important risk factors of heart disease that you can directly target is the sheer amount of stress in your life. Choose a healthy coping strategy like meditation, exercise, or self-expression through the arts to relieve your stress naturally. This can lower cortisol levels and lower your risk of heart disease.

In simple terms, reducing your risk of heart disease goes hand-in-hand with making lifestyle changes to better your overall health. While there are some risk factors that you cannot change (like age, gender, or family history), targeting those that you *can* change can be monumental.

Cholesterol 101

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), there's a direct correlation between having high cholesterol levels and eventually developing heart disease or having a heart attack or stroke. Despite the negative reputation that cholesterol often receives, it's an absolutely necessary nutrient when it comes to the optimal functioning of the human body.

Cholesterol is known for playing a vital role in digestion as well as hormone development. Yet, cholesterol becomes unhealthy when levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, also known as the "bad" cholesterol, exceeds recommended limits. This can cause blockages within the arteries and veins, making blood flow through the body a more complicated task.



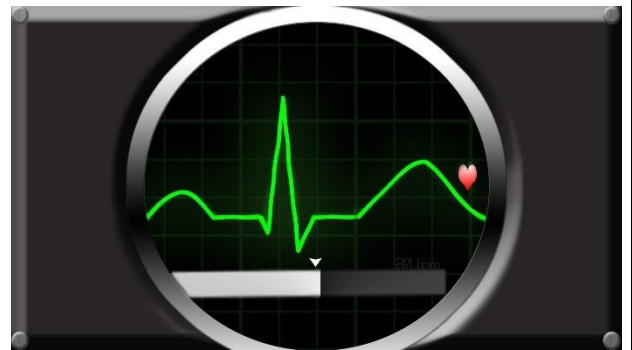
There's also a "good" cholesterol, known as high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol. This type of cholesterol is known for clearing the arteries and blood vessels of LDL build-up, sending it to your liver for future removal.

The general recommendation is to consume 300mg or less of cholesterol per day via food, though less is better if you're already at heightened risk for heart disease. That means staying away from fatty and greasy foods as often as possible.

How Lifestyle Choices Contribute To Heart Disease

Fortunately, many cases of heart disease are caused by lifestyle choices. While no instance of heart disease is “good news,” the positive is that lifestyle changes can help to reduce your overall risk of these conditions.

Tobacco, alcohol, and drug use are all linked to an increased risk of many heart diseases. In particular, these substances are known to increase blood pressure as well as narrow the blood pathways throughout the body.



In addition, being overweight and sedentary are both known to impact heart health significantly. This combination is linked to reduced strength of the heart muscle, poor blood flow, and high blood pressure.

Unless you’re intentionally consuming a healthy diet, getting adequate exercise, and avoiding substances, then you’re not doing much to lower your risk of heart disease.

Diagnosing Heart Disease

A heart disease diagnosis will often come after you experience a prolonged period of symptoms or suffer severe medical consequences, such as a heart attack or a stroke. A visit to your doctor is necessary to discuss the symptoms you're experiencing and undergo testing to receive a proper diagnosis.

Your doctor will begin by taking your pulse and blood pressure at the beginning of the appointment. Any oddities in this data will be noted and investigated thoroughly to determine the likely cause. If your doctor suspects that you have heart disease, you may be asked to undergo blood testing to check your cholesterol, triglycerides, and C-protein levels.



Additional testing to verify a heart disease diagnosis may include:

- **Computed Tomography (CT) Scan:** This type of scan is similar to an X-ray and can be used to detect blockages or plaque build-ups in your coronary arteries.
- **Echocardiogram:** This test will utilize sound waves to create a visual of each area of your heart, such as the valves and chambers, and any potential issues related to them.

- **Electrocardiogram (ECG):** This test will detect the electrical activity in the heart, often used to diagnose heart arrhythmias or narrow coronary arteries.
- **Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI):** This style of testing will give doctors a clear visual image of your heart, specifically when it comes to tissue damage or disrepair.
- **Stress Test:** This is a physical fitness test that'll analyze how your heart responds to activity and how blood flow throughout your body is impacted.

The diagnosis that your doctor anticipates will determine which tests you ultimately undergo. Fortunately, your doctor will utilize non-invasive testing methods *first*.

Warning Signs For Men

There are a few unique warning signs for heart disease in men, though there are many instances where the disease presents no symptoms at all and goes undetected. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) provides the following signs:

- **Arrhythmia:** Chest palpitations (a fluttering sensation in the chest)
- **Heart Attack:** Pain in back or neck, fatigue, chest pain, chest tightness and shortness of breath, dizziness
- **Heart Failure:** Extreme fatigue, swollen lower extremities, shortness of breath and chest tightness

Unfortunately, about half of all men with heart disease will never know they have it.

Warning Signs For Women

Just as there are unique warning signs for heart disease in men, there are also a few distinctive signs in women. Unlike men, women are less likely to experience chest pain during a heart attack, but more likely to experience shortness of breath during a cardiac emergency.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) provides the following signs (the same as men):

- **Arrhythmia:** Chest palpitations (a fluttering sensation in the chest)
- **Heart Attack:** Pain in back or neck, fatigue, chest pain, chest tightness and shortness of breath, dizziness
- **Heart Failure:** Extreme fatigue, swollen lower extremities, shortness of breath and chest tightness

Some women also never present with symptoms of heart disease prior to a heart attack, stroke, or death.

Typical Treatment Options

Treatment options for heart disease will depend on quite a few factors, including the specific diagnosis and the severity of your condition. Some heart diseases are even relatively reversible through strategic lifestyle changes, so further treatment may not even be necessary.

Treatment options may include the following:

The [American Heart Association](#) states that angioplasty is specifically for heart disease conditions that involve artery blockages.

Your doctor will maneuver a thin catheter through your blood vessels toward the area of the blocked artery. Once there, a balloon-like device at the end of the catheter will

inflate and widen the artery to normal standards. A stent will be placed to keep this artery open and unblocked.

When coronary artery disease (CAD) becomes severe, blood flow through the arteries is either limited or completely blocked. Coronary bypass surgery is the treatment that follows an unsuccessful angioplasty. This surgery will transfer a vein from elsewhere in your body to the heart to provide an alternative pathway for the blood.



In other cases, heart disease may be treatable with drugs or medication. Some common medications include beta-blockers that will help to reduce blood pressure and aspirin to lower the risk of blood clots in the heart, according to [MedlinePlus](#).

Prevention: What You Can Do To Maintain A Healthy Heart

Whether you have a family history of heart disease or are simply looking to lower your overall risk, there are plenty of things you can do to keep your heart as healthy as possible. Fortunately, even minor changes can do wonders for your heart health.



Here's a look at what you can do to maintain a healthy heart and effectively lower your risk of developing heart disease.

- **Eat a Heart-Healthy Diet:** As important as it is to cut back on cholesterol, sodium, sugar, and unhealthy fats, you also want to add heart-healthy foods to your current diet. That includes adding fiber to lower your LDL cholesterol levels, olive oil to raise your HDL cholesterol and omega-3 fatty acids for lower triglycerides levels. Be sure to eat a whole food diet that includes healthy fats, whole grains, fruits, and lots of vegetables ([Cleveland Clinic](#)).
- **Get 150 Minutes of Exercise Per Week:** Endurance exercises like running, biking, and swimming are known for improving heart muscle strength and improving the efficiency of blood flow throughout the body. In an effort to keep your blood pressure stabilized, get at least 150 minutes of moderate-

intensity aerobic exercise each and every week to stay healthy and fit ([American Heart Association](#)).

- **Get 7 or More Hours of Sleep Per Night:** Getting the recommended hours of quality sleep per night is scientifically proven to lower your risk of cardiovascular disease. At least 7 hours of sleep each night is known to lower your risk of high blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes, all of which are risk factors for heart disease. To get quality sleep, limit distractions in your bedroom and lower the temperature to 60 to 67 degrees ([CDC](#)).
- **Get Down to a Healthy Weight:** As your weight continues to increase, so does your risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, and elevated blood pressure. Cut back on your caloric intake and burn extra calories through exercise to lose a healthy amount of weight per week, typically about 1 to 2 pounds. A weekly one pound weight loss takes a deficit of about 500 calories each day.
- **Adopt a Pet:** A dog or cat on their own won't nullify your risk of heart disease, but owning a pet is linked to a lower risk overall. That's because pets are known to induce a calming effect within the body, lower levels of stress, and reduce blood pressure. Plus, owning a dog will get you up and moving as you go on daily walks with your new best friend ([Harvard Medical School](#)).
- **Keep Track of Your Fitness.** You don't realize how little you move during the day until you take a look at the scientific data. By investing in a fitness tracker (like a Fitbit), you can see how many steps you're really walking per

day. Many organizations assert that walking at least 8,000 steps every single day is linked to a 51% lower risk of death from conditions like heart disease ([American Cancer Society](#)).

Keeping your heart healthy also means taking preventative measures, such as visiting a doctor on a yearly basis. The doctor can evaluate your blood pressure, cholesterol levels and overall heart health. Regular evaluations can save lives as problems that are detected early are more successful in being treated and/or reversed.

Unfortunately, there is no 100% effective way to prevent heart disease given a potentially heightened risk due to genetic factors and mutations as well as socioeconomic factors. But there is a lot you can do to keep your heart well and pumping well into your old age.

Heart Attack And Cardiac Arrest

Pre-existing heart disease or related conditions is a pretty clear indicator that you have an increased risk of experiencing a heart attack. However, [research](#) shows that about half of all heart attacks occur unexpectedly without prior symptoms of heart disease. Many also experience a heart attack without presenting any symptoms.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states that someone in the United States has a heart attack every 40 seconds. That's about 805,000 Americans every year. Thinking that you may be having a heart attack can



be confusing and scary. Knowing the warning sign of a heart attack may help you or a loved one quickly get the help you need.

What is a Heart Attack?

Doctors at the Mayo Clinic describe a heart attack as a blood flow problem to the heart muscle. Your heart is the hardest working muscle in your body. It pumps blood to every organ, tissue, and cell in your body to keep it working.

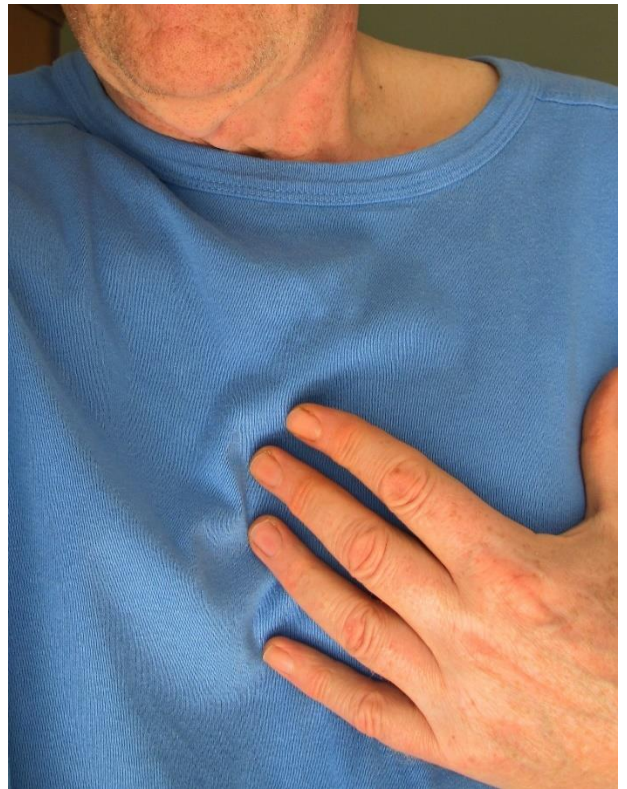
The heart also pumps blood to itself, so it functions properly. When blood flow to the heart is disrupted, it can cause noticeable symptoms. A heart attack can also cause damage to the heart that makes it harder for it to keep functioning correctly.

Plaques can form inside the blood vessels that lead to the heart. Plaques develop when fat, cholesterol, and clotting factors in the blood group together inside the blood vessels. Sometimes, a plaque can rupture and form a clot. The clot blocks blood from flowing through the blood vessel to your heart.

A heart attack, which is also called a myocardial infarction (MI), is when a clot blocks the blood flow to the heart. A heart attack can damage the heart muscle and cause it to stop working. Quick treatment is needed to minimize the damage to the heart and keep it working.

What is Cardiac Arrest?

Although the terms heart attack and cardiac arrest are often used interchangeably, the cause of each is different. According to Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) training, a heart attack is a blood flow problem, and a cardiac arrest is an electrical problem with the heart.



Your body sends electrical signals to make your heart pump. Abnormalities in the electrical impulses cause an irregular heartbeat. When the heartbeat becomes ineffective, and the heart isn't pumping blood to your body, it's known as cardiac arrest.

Signs And Symptoms Of Heart Attack

The American Heart Association states that while a heart attack can happen suddenly, there are often warning signs before a heart attack occurs.

Doctors at Harvard Medical School list these common and uncommon heart attack warning signs:

- Pain, squeezing, fullness, burning, tightness, or uncomfortable pressure in the center of the chest
- Pain, numbness, pinching, prickling, or other uncomfortable sensations in one or both arms, or in the back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Sudden indigestion. Nausea, or vomiting
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Unusual fatigue
- Sudden heat or flushing, or a cold sweat
- Heaviness, weakness, or pain in one or both arms
- Back pain
- Racing or fluttering heart

Warning Signs Of Cardiac

- Sudden collapse with no response
- Absence of breathing or irregular breaths ([Harvard Health](#))

Warning Signs in Women

Doctors at the Cleveland Clinic explain that women may experience some different warning signs than men.

Women should be aware of these additional warning signs:

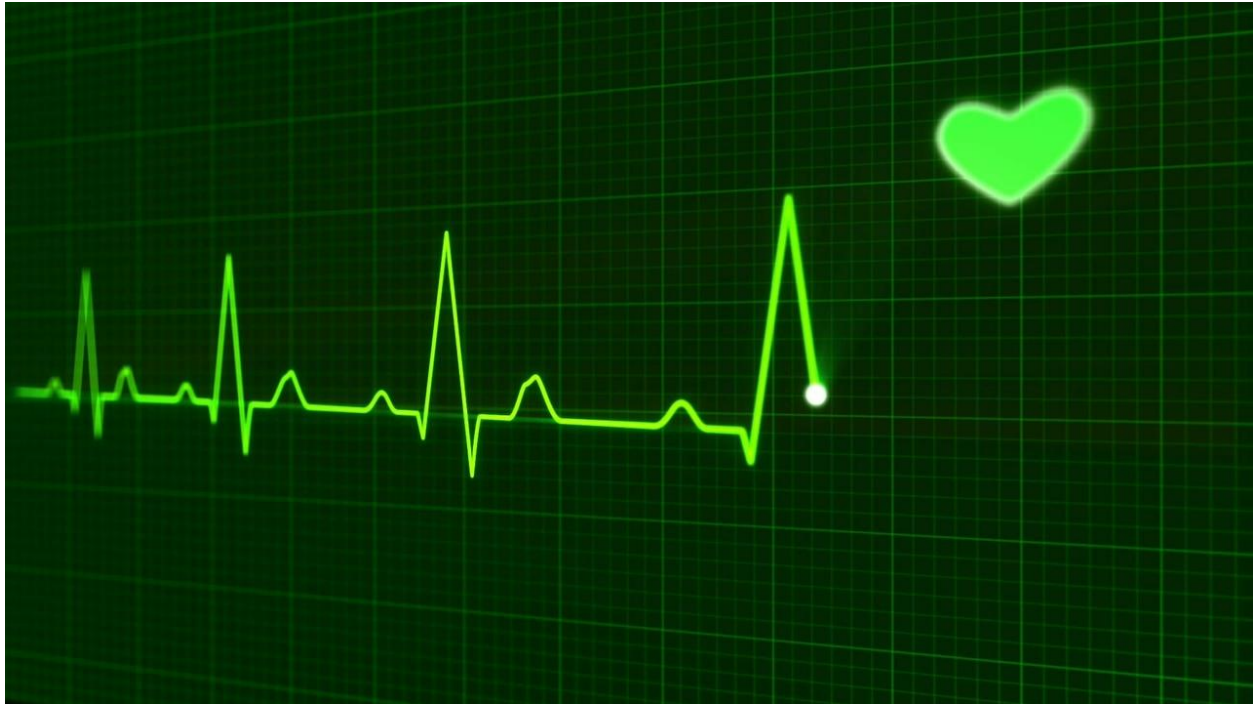
- Women can have pain in either arm, not just the left one like many men.
- Pain in the lower or upper back often starts in the chest and spreads to these areas.
- The pain is sometimes sudden, not due to physical exertion, and can wake you up at night.
- You may feel pain that is specific to the left, lower side of the jaw. ([Cleveland Clinic](#))



Women may experience unusual fatigue, and although they feel tired, they may also experience sleep disturbances. Jaw, neck, or back pain that can't be traced to a specific sore muscle or joint may also be warning signs of a heart condition or heart attack. Heart problems can trigger nerve damage that radiates to other areas.

Knowing the warning signs of a heart attack can save a life. If you or someone you know is experiencing any of these warning signs, call 911 immediately.

If you suspect that you or someone else is having a heart attack, call 9-1-1 immediately for medical treatment and intervention. Time is of the essence and the delay of treatment greatly increases your risk of mortality.



Learn More: Heart Organizations/Foundation

Learning about heart disease is the most useful tool when it comes to preventing heart disease or receiving an early diagnosis. There are plenty of national organizations and foundations dedicated to heart disease that you can turn to in a time of need. These organizations include:

- [The American Heart Association](#): This non-profit organization is one of the most well-known heart health organizations in the nation. It's known for providing Americans with health and medical information related to heart health and offers CPR courses so that you can be a beacon of hope if a loved one experiences a heart emergency.
- [WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease](#): This organization is centered around the idea of providing medical services to women with heart disease. WomenHeart helps women with a heart disease diagnosis get access to life-saving testing, available treatment options, and important reading materials.
- [The Heart Foundation](#): This organization was developed in honor of Steven Cohen, a man who passed away unexpectedly as a result of undiagnosed heart disease. The goal of this organization is to increase the public's awareness of these diseases and encourage early testing in those with suspected risk factors.
- [The Children's Heart Foundation](#): This organization is dedicated to children diagnosed with a congenital heart defect. Funding derived from this

organization goes directly toward research in the field, hoping to aid doctors in improving survival rates and treatment methods for those with these conditions.

Though these organizations and foundations may be helpful to those impacted by heart disease, they're not a replacement for doctor's visits and medical treatments. It's a great idea to learn about heart disease from these resources but always go to your doctor for a medical opinion.

Final Thoughts

Heart disease is a serious medical condition and, statistically, there's a rather high chance that you or someone you know will be impacted by it personally. With that said, it's important to know what the key warning signs are and whether or not there are risk factors in *your* life that increase your risk of such a condition.

Visiting a doctor on an annual basis and when you're feeling ill is a great way to catch heart disease early, especially if you're undergoing frequent blood testing and heart monitoring.

There is no guaranteed way to prevent heart disease altogether. However, eating a healthy diet, engaging in frequent exercise, lowering your stress levels, and avoiding illegal substances can all help to lower your overall risk.



If you do receive a heart disease diagnosis, early detection can greatly improve your odds of survival and improved quality of life. Appropriate treatment methods will be recommended by your doctor and lifestyle changes will be in order.

Heart disease *doesn't* have to be fatal. So, be sure to prioritize your heart health and make an appointment immediately if you notice the warning signs.

Choose Life! Stay well and take care!