



WALK YOUR HEART TO HEALTH: HEART HEALTH

What Is A Heart Attack?

The heart works 24 hours a day, pumping oxygen- and nutrient-rich blood to the body. Blood is supplied to the heart through its coronary arteries. In coronary heart disease (CHD), plaques or fatty substances build up inside the walls of the arteries. The plaques also attract blood components, which stick to the artery wall lining. Called atherosclerosis, the process develops gradually, over many years. It often begins early in life, even in childhood.

The fatty buildup or plaque can break open and lead to the formation of a blood clot that seals the break. The clot reduces blood flow. The cycle of fatty buildup, plaque rupture, and blood clot formation causes the coronary arteries to narrow, reducing blood flow.

When too little blood reaches the heart, the condition is called ischemia. Chest pain, or angina, may occur. The pain can vary in occurrence and be mild and intermittent, or more pronounced and steady. It can be severe enough to make normal everyday activities difficult. The same inadequate blood supply also may cause no symptoms, a condition called silent ischemia.

If a blood clot suddenly cuts off most or all blood supply to the heart, a heart attack results. Cells in the heart muscle that do not receive enough oxygen-carrying blood begin to die. The more time that passes without treatment to restore blood flow, the greater the damage to the heart.

Who's At Risk?

Heart attacks strike both men and women. However, some persons are more likely to have a heart attack because of their "risk factors." Risk factors are behaviors or conditions that increase the chance of a disease. Some of the risk factors for heart attack are beyond your control, but most can be modified to help you lower your risk.

Factors You CANNOT Control Are:

- Any pre-existing coronary heart disease
- Age- In men, the risk increases after age 45; in women, it increases after age 55.
- Family history of early heart disease. A father or brother diagnosed before age 55; or a mother or sister diagnosed before age 65.

Factors You CAN Control

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Overweight and obesity
- Physical inactivity
- Diabetes

Risk factors do not add their effects in a simple way. Rather, they multiply each other's effects. So, it is important to prevent or control risk factors that can be modified. If you have one or more of these factors, see your health care provider to find out how to reduce your risk of heart attack.



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What Is A Stroke?

A stroke happens when the brain does not get the blood it needs.

There are 2 main ways a stroke can happen:

1. A blood vessel in the brain becomes blocked by a blood clot.
2. A blood vessel in the brain bursts and stops the supply of blood to part of the brain.

A stroke can cause serious brain damage, disability and even death.

Warning Signs of Stroke

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking, trouble understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

Risk Factors for Stroke

A risk factor is something that increases your chance of having a stroke. Common risk factors and strategies for change are listed below:

- **High blood pressure:** Change your habits. Eat a balanced diet, maintain a healthy weight and increase your physical activity to reduce blood pressure. If needed, take medicines as your doctor advises to control your high blood pressure.
- **Heart Disease:** Change and maintain the heart healthy habits listed under 'High blood pressure'. Take medicines as your doctor advises to prevent the formation of clots, which can travel to the brain and cause strokes.
- **Diabetes or problem with blood sugar:** Follow the healthy habits listed above. Taking insulin or other medicines as your doctor advises can delay complications that increase the risk of stroke
- **Tobacco:** Consider quitting and replace your tobacco habit with healthy habits like going on a walk.

Source: Community Health Worker's Sourcebook