What Is Heart Disease?

Heart disease refers to a number of diseases that affect the heart or blood vessels. Coronary artery disease (CAD) is the most common. CAD is the leading cause of death in men and women. Many people with heart disease do not know they have CAD until they have a heart attack.

CAD occurs when the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle (coronary arteries) harden and narrow. This is caused by a buildup of fat and cholesterol inside the arteries. As the coronary arteries narrow, blood flow to the heart is reduced. This can cause chest pain (angina). If the blockage is severe, it can cause a heart attack.

If the heart is seriously damaged by a heart attack or other causes, heart failure can occur. This does not mean that the heart stops, but that the heart is unable to pump enough blood to meet the body’s needs. With heart failure, the heart may grow bigger trying to pump more blood. Blood can also back up in the veins, causing fluid buildup, swelling in the legs and feet, and fluid in the lungs. Shortness of breath during activity, rest, or when lying down can occur. If you experience these warning signs of heart failure, contact your health care provider immediately.

The Heart Health Organizer is designed to help people with heart conditions stay healthy.

Healthy Heart Habits

Move Your Body
- Always ask your health care provider first before starting an activity program.
- Aim for 30 minutes of activity most days – all at once, or in three 10-minute sessions.
- Don’t go too fast. Start with 5 – 10 minutes a day and build up slowly.
- Walk in the mall with a friend, ride a stationary bike while reading a book, or take a dance class.
- Do something – any activity is better than none. Even light gardening and housework can help.

Eat Smart
- Eat a variety of brightly colored fruits and vegetables.
- Replace white breads, pastries, and rice with whole grain, high-fiber foods.
- Choose fat-free and low-fat (1%) dairy products, fish, beans, whole-grain breads, and lean meats.
- Avoid all foods with trans fat. Choose vegetable oils such as canola and olive oil.
- Keep the salt shaker off the table and stove.
- Aim for five small meals rather than three big meals each day.

Manage Stress and Depression
- Balance work and play.
- Listen to soothing music.
- Find the positive in every situation.
- Learn to forgive yourself and others.
- If you feel sad or hopeless much of the time, have lost interest in things you used to enjoy, or are not eating or sleeping as usual, talk to your health care provider about depression. Depression can be treated.

Stay Involved and Connected
- Choose enjoyable daily activities that provide you with feelings of accomplishment and purpose.
- Try volunteering, a new hobby, a class, or any other activity that keeps you stimulated.
- Schedule regular social activities such as talking with friends, card games, movies, or a favorite hobby.
- Regularly share your feelings, hopes, concerns, and goals with friends and family members.

Using the Heart Health Organizer

Use the Heart Health Organizer to help you remember to schedule and track important heart screenings and tests. Take it along to every health care provider visit. Always talk with your health care provider about which heart treatments, medications, and lifestyle changes are best for you.

The Heart Health Organizer is provided for informational purposes only. Always seek the advice of your health care provider about which heart treatments, medications, and lifestyle changes are best for you.
Your Healthy Heart Plan

There are important steps you can take each day to keep your heart healthy. Ask your health care provider for a plan that’s right for you.

• Take recommended medications. Taking the right medications correctly as prescribed is one of the most important steps you can take. Remember that many medications need to be taken for months or years to help.

• Move your body every day. Regular physical activity keeps your heart and body healthy. Physical activity can also improve your mood and keep your mind sharp.

• Eat smart. Reducing saturated fats and trans fats helps keep your arteries clear. Choose vegetables, fruits, and whole grains rather than your risky for many diseases including heart disease.

• Don’t smoke. If you smoke, ask your health care provider for ways to help you quit.

• Stay involved and connected. Make time for the activities and people you enjoy.

• Manage stress and depression. Persistent emotional stress can be harmful to your health. Untreated depression may increase your risk of a second heart attack.

• Stay alert for the warning signs of a heart attack. Chest or upper body pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, a cold sweat, and nausea or vomiting require an emergency medical help. Dial 911 immediately.

• Watch for diabetes. If you’re overweight, inactive, or have a family history of heart problems and stroke.

• Be aware of your family history. If your health care provider determines that you need a non-formulary medication to treat a chronic condition, he or she can contact Provider Services for formulary questions or to submit a formulary exception request.

• Keep track of your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. Ask your provider if you need any additional tests.

• Take recommended medications. Your health care provider can help you choose the right medications to take for months or years to help.

• Ask Your Health Care Provider about these Important Health Screenings and Vaccines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blood Pressure</td>
<td>To detect high blood pressure</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>To detect high cholesterol</td>
<td>Every 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lipids</td>
<td>To detect high cholesterol and triglycerides</td>
<td>Every 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glucose</td>
<td>To detect diabetes</td>
<td>Annual or more often as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemoglobin A1c</td>
<td>To detect diabetes</td>
<td>Every 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urine Albumin</td>
<td>To detect diabetes</td>
<td>Every 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood Urea Nitrogen (BUN)</td>
<td>To detect kidney disease</td>
<td>Every 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creatinine</td>
<td>To detect kidney disease</td>
<td>Every 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrocardiogram (ECG)</td>
<td>To detect heart rhythm problems</td>
<td>As needed</td>
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</tbody>
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Frequently Recommended Heart Disease Drugs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statins</td>
<td>Lower cholesterol levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta Blockers</td>
<td>Reduce heart rate and blood pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE Inhibitors or ARBs</td>
<td>Lower blood pressure and reduce strain on heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirin</td>
<td>Prevent heart attacks and strokes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology Guidelines for Preventing Heart Attack and Death in Patients with Known Coronary Artery Disease (2007)