

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States.

More than 600,000 Americans die of heart disease every year.¹

What is Heart Disease?

There are several heart conditions that are considered heart disease. The most common type of heart disease is coronary artery disease. This can cause a heart attack. Some kinds of heart diseases may involve the valves of the heart or the heart may not pump well. This can cause heart failure. Some people are born with heart disease.

Risks of Heart Disease

Anyone can develop heart disease – even children. It occurs when a substance called plaque builds up in your arteries. This can cause your arteries to narrow over time. Your blood flow to the heart can also be reduced.

Your age and family history can increase your risk for heart disease. The following also can increase your risk:

- Smoking and other forms of tobacco.
- Eating an unhealthy diet.
- Not getting enough exercise.
- Having high cholesterol.
- High blood pressure.
- Diabetes.

Talk to your doctor about preventing or treating these medical conditions.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms can vary depending on the type of heart disease. For most, chest discomfort or a heart attack is the first sign. The symptoms include:

- Chest pain or discomfort that doesn't go away after a few minutes.
- Pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck, or back.
- Weakness, lightheadedness, nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), or a cold sweat.
- Pain or discomfort in the arms or shoulder.
- Shortness of breath.

If you think you or someone else is having a heart attack, call 9-1-1 immediately.

How is Heart Disease Diagnosed?

Your doctor can perform several tests to diagnose heart disease. These tests include chest x-rays, coronary angiograms, electrocardiograms (ECG or EKG) and exercise stress tests. Talk to your doctor about what tests may be right for you.

Reduce Your Risk for Heart Disease.

There are ways to reduce your risk for heart disease. If you have heart disease, there are things you can do to help lower your risk from complications. These include:

- Don't smoke.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Exercise regularly.
- Limit alcohol.
- If you have heart disease, your doctor may prescribe medication to treat it.



Talk to your doctor about the best ways to reduce your risk from heart disease.

Sources ¹CDC: Deaths: Final Data for 2009. www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr60/nvsr60_03.pdf

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention