

# What is Heart Disease?

Many diseases can affect the heart. These include disease of the heart's blood vessels (known as coronary artery disease), heart rhythm problems (known as arrhythmias) and disease of the heart's valves (known as valvular heart disease). Often we use the term "heart disease" to mean coronary artery disease (CAD). CAD is caused by blockages or narrowing of the blood vessels around the heart, which can make it harder for the heart muscle to pump blood for the rest of the body.



## WHAT COULD I FEEL IF I HAVE HEART DISEASE IN MY BLOOD VESSELS (CAD)?

- Chest pain (angina)
- Shortness of breath
- Left arm numbness or pain
- Jaw numbness or pain

If you have any of these symptoms when you are exerting yourself, you should talk to your doctor as soon as possible. If you have these even when you are resting, this could be a sign of a heart attack and may be an emergency.

## WHAT INCREASES MY RISK FOR CAD?

- High blood sugar (diabetes)
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Family history of CAD
- High cholesterol
- Smoking
- Increased age
- Stress
- Physical inactivity
- Poor diet
- Excessive alcohol intake
- Obesity (being overweight)

## WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE MY RISK?

- Quit smoking
- Increase physical activity
- Eat a heart healthy diet
- Lose weight
- Limit alcohol intake



## QUITTING SMOKING

- Talk with your health provider about your motivation and the challenges of quitting.
- Try starting by cutting down the number of cigarettes you smoke each day.
- You can also call 877-44U-QUIT (877-448-7848) for advice on how to quit .

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes of moderate exercise 5 times a week. Find something you enjoy, like:

- Brisk walking
- Gardening
- Biking
- Water aerobics



## MIND-BODY THERAPIES TO MANAGE STRESS

- Yoga can help with stress management and physical fitness
- Meditation and tai chi can also help you reduce stress
- Hypnosis can help you to quit smoking

## HEART-HEALTHY EATING

There are many diets and foods that can help prevent heart disease. Talk to your health provider to find out more about what is right for you.

- The Mediterranean diet can lower your chance of CAD. It includes plenty of vegetables, healthy fats like olive oil, and lots of fish.
- The DASH diet can help lower your blood pressure. This diet also includes lots of fruit and vegetables and other foods that are high in fiber, and keeps your salt intake low.
- Eating walnuts regularly can also help your heart stay healthy!

## ARE THERE ANY HERBAL OR DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS THAT I SHOULD TAKE

If you have congestive heart failure, the nutritional supplement Coenzyme Q10 may help you feel better. There may be some other herbs or supplements that can help with blood pressure, cholesterol, stress, and other risk factors for CAD—but you should talk to your health provider before taking any herbs or dietary supplements for your heart.

For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit [nciph.org/heart](http://nciph.org/heart)



