

Common cardiovascular diseases

The four most common types of cardiovascular disease are:

- Æ high blood pressure
- Æ coronary heart disease
- Æ stroke
- Æ rheumatic fever/rheumatic heart disease

Other forms include:

- Æ arrhythmias
- Æ diseases of the arteries, arterioles and capillaries
- Æ bacterial endocarditis
- Æ congenital cardiovascular defects
- Æ congestive heart failure
- Æ valvular heart disease
- Æ hypertensive disease
- Æ diseases of pulmonary circulation
- Æ diseases of veins and lymphatics

Hardening of the arteries, or atherosclerosis, is when the inner walls of the arteries become more narrow due to a buildup of plaque. Blood clots form, so less blood can get through. This can cause heart attacks and strokes.

High blood pressure, also called hypertension, means the pressure in your arteries is consistently above the normal range. Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls. It is written as two numbers, such as 122/78 mm Hg. The top (systolic) number is the pressure when the heart beats. The bottom (diastolic) number is the pressure when the heart is at rest. High blood pressure is a consistently elevated pressure of 140 mm Hg systolic or higher and/or 90 mm Hg diastolic or higher. The great danger is that you usually can't tell you have high blood pressure. There are no signs, so you must see a doctor every year. Also, no one knows exactly what causes it. High blood pressure can lead to hardened arteries, stroke or heart attack.

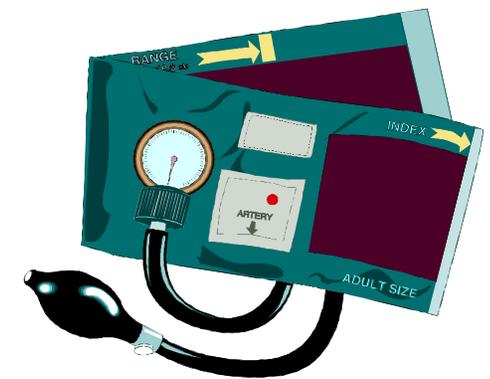
Heart attacks occur when the blood flow to a part of the heart is blocked, often by a blood clot. If this clot cuts off the flow completely, the part of the heart muscle supplied by that artery begins to die.

Heart failure means that your heart isn't pumping blood as well as it should. It keeps working, but the body doesn't get all the blood and oxygen it needs. See a doctor if you notice either of these symptoms:

- Æ swelling in the feet, ankles and legs, called edema
- Æ fluid build up in lungs, called "pulmonary congestion"

Stroke and TIA (Warning Stroke)

happens when a blood vessel that supplies oxygen to the brain gets clogged or bursts. Then that part of the brain can't work and neither can the part of the body it controls. Major risk factors of stroke are uncontrolled high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes, carotid artery disease and heart disease.



Know the warning signs of a heart attack and stroke

Warning signs of heart attack:

- ⌘ Uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing pain in the center of chest that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back
- ⌘ Pain that spreads to the shoulders, neck, and arms
- ⌘ Chest discomfort with lightheadedness, fainting, sweating, nausea or shortness of breath.

Less common warning signs of heart attack:

- ⌘ Atypical chest, stomach or abdominal pain.
- ⌘ Nausea and dizziness
- ⌘ Shortness of breath and difficulty breathing (without chest pain)
- ⌘ Unexplained anxiety, weakness or fatigue
- ⌘ Palpitations, cold sweat or paleness

Not all of these signs occur in every attack. Sometimes they go away and return. If some occur, get help fast. If you notice one or more of these signs in another person, call 911.



Warning signs and symptoms of stroke:

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

Women and stroke

Stroke is a woman's problem too. Stroke is the third leading cause of death for American women after diseases of the heart and cancer. It claims more than twice as many lives as breast cancer. Get more statistical facts about women and stroke from:

<http://women.americanheart.org>



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Women and Heart Disease

Understanding the risks and symptoms of cardiovascular disease.

