

Reduce Your Risk

You can reduce your chances of getting **heart disease** by taking these steps:

Know your blood pressure. Years of high blood pressure can lead to heart disease. People with high blood pressure often have no symptoms, so have your blood pressure checked every 1 to 2 years and get treatment if you need it.

Don't smoke. If you smoke, try to quit. If you're having trouble quitting, there are products and programs that can help:

- Nicotine patches and gums
- Support groups
- Programs to help you stop smoking

Ask your doctor or nurse for help. For more information on quitting, visit our section on Smoking and how to quit.

Get tested for diabetes. People with diabetes have high blood glucose (often called blood sugar). People with high blood glucose often have no symptoms, so have your blood glucose checked regularly. Having diabetes raises your chances of getting heart disease. If you have diabetes, your doctor will decide if you need diabetes pills or insulin shots. Your doctor can also help you make a healthy eating and exercise plan.

Get your cholesterol and triglyceride levels tested. High blood cholesterol can clog your arteries and keep your heart from getting the blood it needs. This can cause a heart attack. Triglycerides are a form of fat in your blood stream. High levels of triglycerides are linked to heart disease in some people. People with high blood cholesterol or high blood triglycerides often have no symptoms, so have both levels checked regularly. If your levels are high, talk to your doctor about what you can do to lower them. You may be able to lower your both levels by eating better and exercising more. Your doctor may prescribe medication to help lower your cholesterol.

Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight raises your risk for heart disease. Calculate your Body Mass Index (BMI) to see if you are at a healthy weight. Healthy food choices and physical activity are important to staying at a healthy weight:

Start by adding more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to your diet.

Each week, aim to get at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity.

If you drink alcohol, limit it to no more than one drink for women, two for men (one 12 ounce beer, one 5 ounce glass of wine, or one 1.5 ounce shot of hard liquor) a day.

Find healthy ways to cope with stress. Lower your stress level by talking to your friends, exercising, or writing in a journal.

Source: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/heart-disease.html#d>



Know the Signs

For both women and men, the most common sign of a heart attack is:

- Pain or discomfort in the center of the chest. The pain or discomfort can be mild or strong. It can last more than a few minutes, or it can go away and come back.

Other common signs of a heart attack include:

- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Shortness of breath (feeling like you can't get enough air). The shortness of breath often occurs before or along with the chest pain or discomfort.
- Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) or vomiting
- Feeling faint or woozy
- Breaking out in a cold sweat

Women are more likely than men to have these other common signs of a heart attack, particularly shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting, and pain in the back, neck, or jaw.

Women are also more likely to have less common signs of a heart attack, including:

- Heartburn
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling tired or weak
- Coughing
- Heart flutters

Sometimes the signs of a heart attack happen suddenly, but they can also develop slowly, over hours, days, and even weeks before a heart attack occurs.

The more heart attack signs that you have, the more likely it is that you are having a heart attack. Also, if you've already had a heart attack, your symptoms may not be the same for another one. Even if you're not sure you're having a heart attack, you should still have it checked out.

If you think you, or someone else, may be having a heart attack, wait no more than a few minutes—five at most—before calling 911.

Source: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/heart-disease.html#j>

