# Cardiovascular Diseases

Cardiovascular disease is a broad term for problems with the heart and blood vessels.

These problems are often due to atherosclerosis. This condition occurs when fat and cholesterol build up on the walls of the blood vessel (artery). This buildup is called plaque. Over time, plaque can narrow blood vessels and cause problems throughout the body. If an artery becomes blocked, this can lead to a heart attack or stroke.
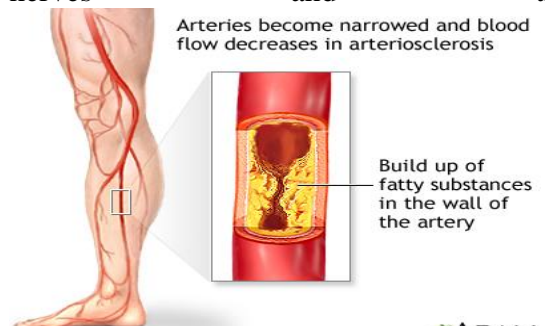
Types of Cardiovascular Diseases

1. **Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) or coronary artery disease (CAD)-** It is the most common type of heart disease. This happens when plaque builds up in the arteries leading to the heart. When the arteries are narrowed, the heart cannot get enough blood and oxygen. A blocked artery can cause a heart attack.

2. **Heart Failure-** This occurs when the heart muscle becomes stiff or weak and consequently cannot pump enough oxygenated blood, causing symptoms throughout the body. The disease can affect the right or left side of the heart. High blood pressure and coronary artery disease are common causes of heart failure.
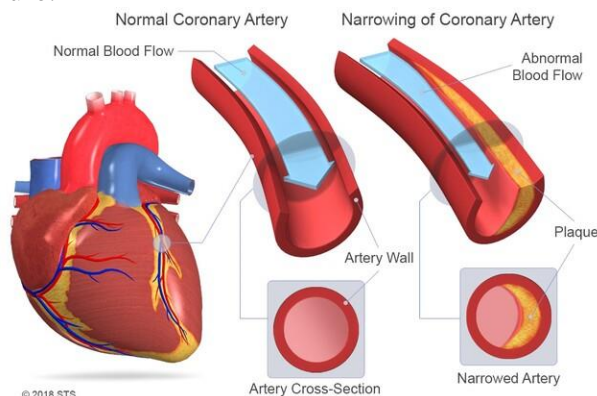
3. **Arrhythmias-** These are problems with the heart rate (pulse) or heart rhythm. This occurs when the heart's electrical system does not work properly. The heart may beat too fast, too slow, or irregularly.

Some heart problems, such as heart attack or heart failure, can cause problems with the heart's electrical system.

4. **Heart Valve Disease-** These occur when one of the four valves in the heart does not work properly. Blood may leak through the valve in the wrong direction, or a valve may not open wide enough and block blood flow. The most common symptom is an unusual heartbeat, called a heart murmur.

5. **Peripheral Arterial Disease-** This occurs when the arteries in the legs and feet become narrowed due to a buildup of plaque. Narrowed arteries reduce or block blood flow. When blood and oxygen cannot reach the legs, this can damage nerves and tissues.

6. **High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)-** It is a cardiovascular disease that can lead to other problems such as heart attack, heart failure and stroke.

7. **Stroke-** It is caused by lack of blood flow to the brain. This can happen due to a blood clot traveling to blood vessels in the brain or bleeding in the brain.

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Stroke has many of the same risk factors as heart disease.

8. **Congenital Heart Disease (CHD)-** Is a problem with the structure and function of the heart that is present at birth. This term can describe many different problems that affect the heart. It is the most common type of birth defect.

How can they be prevented?
There are many things you can do to reduce your chances of cardiovascular disease. Between them:

- **Control your blood pressure-** About 1 in 3 adults in the United States has high blood pressure or hypertension. Many don't know it because high blood pressure gives no warning signs. This can be dangerous, because it can lead to life-threatening conditions, such as heart attack or stroke. Blood pressure is the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your arteries. Every time your heart beats, it pumps blood into your arteries. Your blood pressure is highest when your heart beats, pumping blood. This is called systolic pressure. When your heart is at rest, between beats, your blood pressure drops. This is called diastolic pressure. Your blood pressure reading uses these two numbers. The systolic number is usually placed before or above the diastolic number. For example, 120/80 means a systolic pressure of 120 and a diastolic pressure of 80. To help control your blood pressure, you should limit the amount of sodium (salt) you eat and increase the amount of potassium in your diet.
- **Lower your cholesterol –** if you have too much cholesterol in your blood, it can stick to the walls of your arteries, narrowing or even blocking them. Low-density cholesterol, or LDL, is sometimes called "bad" cholesterol and can lead to a buildup of plaque in the arteries. High-density cholesterol, or HDL, is also known as "good" cholesterol. A heart-healthy diet limits the amount of saturated and trans fats you eat.

It recommends that you eat just enough calories to stay at a healthy weight and avoid weight gain. Encourages choosing a variety of nutritious foods including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean meats.

- **Quit smoking-** Quitting smoking can raise your good cholesterol (HDL). Since good cholesterol helps remove bad cholesterol (LDL) from the arteries, having more HDL can help lower LDL cholesterol.
- **Get enough exercise-** Exercising regularly is one of the best things you can do for your health. It has many benefits, including improving your general health and fitness and lowering your risk of many chronic diseases. Try to do a total of at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of high-intensity aerobic activity each week, or a combination of both.

Social and Emotional Aspect

For tips, tools, and resources on how you and your family can cope with the emotional and physical concerns that arise during and after your medical treatment, please visit your primary care physician or contact the following phone lines:

First Health Call
1-866-337-3338
TYY- 1-866-921-0101

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