

Understanding Cardiovascular Disease

1. What is CVD?

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) includes all diseases related to the heart or blood vessels in the body. Some of these diseases are:

- Coronary heart disease: heart blood vessel disease
- Congestive heart failure: heart that can no longer pump blood well, usually after a heart attack or when blood pressure is very high
- Peripheral vascular disease: disease or disorders affecting the blood vessels in the arms and legs
- Heart attack: damage to the heart muscle when there is not enough oxygen coming through diseased heart blood vessels
- Stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA or “mini-stroke”): diseased brain blood vessels
- Renal vascular disease: diseased kidney blood vessels

2. What are the signs and symptoms of CVD?

CVD signs and symptoms vary depending on the type of heart or blood vessel disease you have. Some of these signs and symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath, or feeling breathless
- Pain in the chest and/or other areas (for example, arms, back or jaw)
- Fast or irregular heart beat
- Nausea or vomiting
- Feeling lightheaded or dizzy or fainting
- Fatigue
- Swelling of ankles or feet
- Sudden numbness or weakness in face, arms, or legs
- Sudden weight gain
- Tenderness or pain in your legs with walking or during exercise
- Sudden onset of sweating
- Inability to exercise
- Sudden onset of confusion or behavior change in elderly patients

Heart disease can be treated, and it is critical to detect problems early. Heart attacks and strokes can be prevented if you get treatment early.



Risk Factors:

The following may increase your chances of getting CVD:

- Physical inactivity
- Overweight and obesity
- High fat diet
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Age
- Family history
- Race and gender

For More Information:

**Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health**
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/>

**Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)**
<http://www.cdc.gov/dhdspl/>

American Heart Association
<http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/>

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3. How do you manage CVD?

CVD is managed differently based on the disease. Important tips to remember include:

- Follow a heart healthy diet that's low in fat, cholesterol, and sodium.
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Exercise 40 minutes each day 3 to 4 times per week.
- Lose extra weight.
- Cut down and stop smoking. Call 1-800-NO-BUTT (1-800-784-8669) to get information on how to quit.
- Keep your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels under control.
- Take your prescribed medications to control your cholesterol, blood pressure, and diabetes.
- Find ways to manage your stress.



Careful control of CVD can reduce your risk of serious problems to your heart, brain, and blood vessels. If you don't take care of your risks factors, it can lead to heart attacks, strokes, disability and early death.

Complications

Complications of CVD are serious and can lead to an early death and disability. They include:

- Heart attack
- Heart failure
- Stroke
- Aneurysm
- Peripheral artery disease
- Renal failure
- Dementia
- Skin ulcers

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