

Fact Sheet on Heart Disease

What is Heart Disease?

Heart disease includes a number of problems affecting the heart and the blood vessels in the heart.

Types of heart disease include:

1. **Coronary artery disease (CAD)** is the most common type and is the leading cause of heart attacks. When you have CAD, your arteries become hard and narrow. Blood has a hard time getting to the heart, so the heart does not get all the blood it needs. CAD can lead to:
2. **Angina** (an-JEYE-nuh). Angina is chest pain or discomfort that happens when the heart does not get enough blood. It may feel like a pressing or squeezing pain, often in the chest, but sometimes the pain is in the shoulders, arms, neck, jaw, or back. It can also feel like indigestion (upset stomach). Angina is not a heart attack, but having angina means you are more likely to have a heart attack.
3. **Heart attack.** A heart attack occurs when an artery is severely or completely blocked, and the heart does not get the blood it needs for more than 20 minutes.
4. **Heart failure** occurs when the heart is not able to pump blood through the body as well as it should. This means that other organs, which normally get blood from the heart, do not get enough blood. It does *not* mean that the heart stops.

Signs of heart failure include:

- Shortness of breath (feeling like you can't get enough air)
- Swelling in feet, ankles, and legs
- Extreme tiredness

Heart arrhythmias (uh-RITH-mee-uhz) are changes in the beat of the heart. Most people have felt dizzy, faint, out of breath or had chest pains at one time. These changes in heartbeat are harmless for most people. As you get older, you are more likely to have arrhythmias. Don't panic if you have a few flutters or if your heart races once in a while.

How to prevent heart disease?

1. Be physically active
2. Don't smoke
3. Eat healthy
4. Maintain a normal weight
5. Know your numbers (blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglycerides)

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.
- **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 (koh-LESS-tur-ol) can clog your arteries and keep your heart from getting the blood it needs. This can cause a heart attack. Triglycerides (treye-GLIH-suh-ryds) 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. You may be able to lower both your levels by eating better and exercising more.

- **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 (one 1 glass beer, one 1 glass of wine, or one 1.5 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.

We do glucose and cholesterol tests at SWABCHA, at E35.00 each, call us for an appointment!

Information Source

1. http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartAttack/AboutHeartAttacks/About-Heart-Attacks_UCM_002038_Article.jsp
2. <http://womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/heart-disease.cfm#a>