

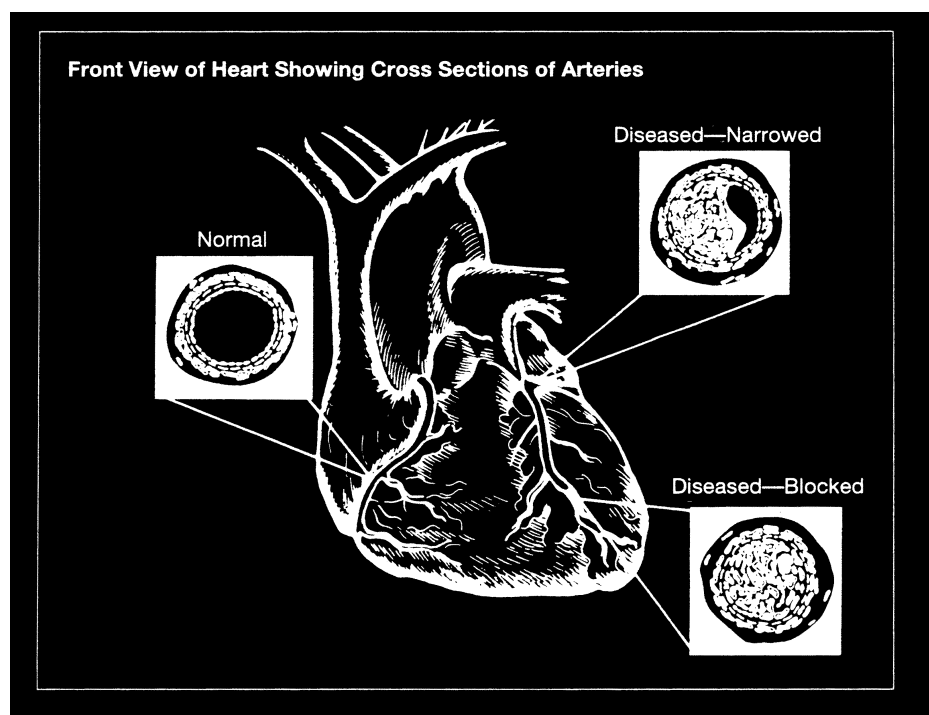
Coronary Heart Disease: What You Should Know



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Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the most common form of heart disease. It is the leading cause of death for men and women in the U.S.

The good news is that you can reduce your risk of CHD, even after a heart attack.



WHAT IS CORONARY HEART DISEASE?

CHD happens when arteries carrying blood to the heart become narrow or blocked. The heart needs a constant supply of oxygen and nutrients. These are carried to it by blood in the coronary arteries. When the heart does not get enough blood, it does not get enough oxygen and nutrients. Coronary heart disease can result.

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The heart may respond with a pain called angina. This pain is usually felt in the chest, but can also be felt in the left arm and shoulder. Sometimes there is no pain at all.

When the blood supply is cut off completely, a heart attack occurs.

WHAT CAUSES CORONARY HEART DISEASE?

CHD is usually caused by too much **cholesterol**, a fat-like substance. Cholesterol and fat circulate in the blood. If there is too much, it can build up in arteries. This slows the flow of blood to the heart.

In addition to high cholesterol, other risk factors are:

- **high blood pressure**
- **lack of exercise**
- **being overweight**
- **smoking**
- **poor diet**
- **diabetes**
- **age over 55**
- **a family history of CHD**

If you are at risk of CHD, you can lower that risk now with lifestyle changes and regular medical care.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE CHD?

Chest pains may cause you to see your doctor. Shortness of breath is another early sign. But sometimes, there are no symptoms before a heart attack. If you have risk factors for CHD, see your doctor for a check-up.

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Some of the tests used to diagnose CHD are:

1. **Echocardiogram**—a picture of the heart made with sound waves
2. **Electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG)**—a graph of the electrical activity of the heart
3. **Exercise stress test**—records heart activity during exercise
4. **Nuclear scanning**—a picture of the heart, to show damaged areas
5. **Angiogram**—a picture of the heart and blood vessels, to show blocked areas

HOW IS CORONARY HEART DISEASE TREATED?

CHD varies with each person. It can be treated with changes in diet and exercise, medication, and, if necessary, surgery. Your doctor will discuss each of these options with you.

The best way to prevent illness and death from CHD is to lower your risk now.

MY RISK FACTORS I CAN CHANGE ARE:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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TO LOWER MY RISK, I CAN:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

NOTES: