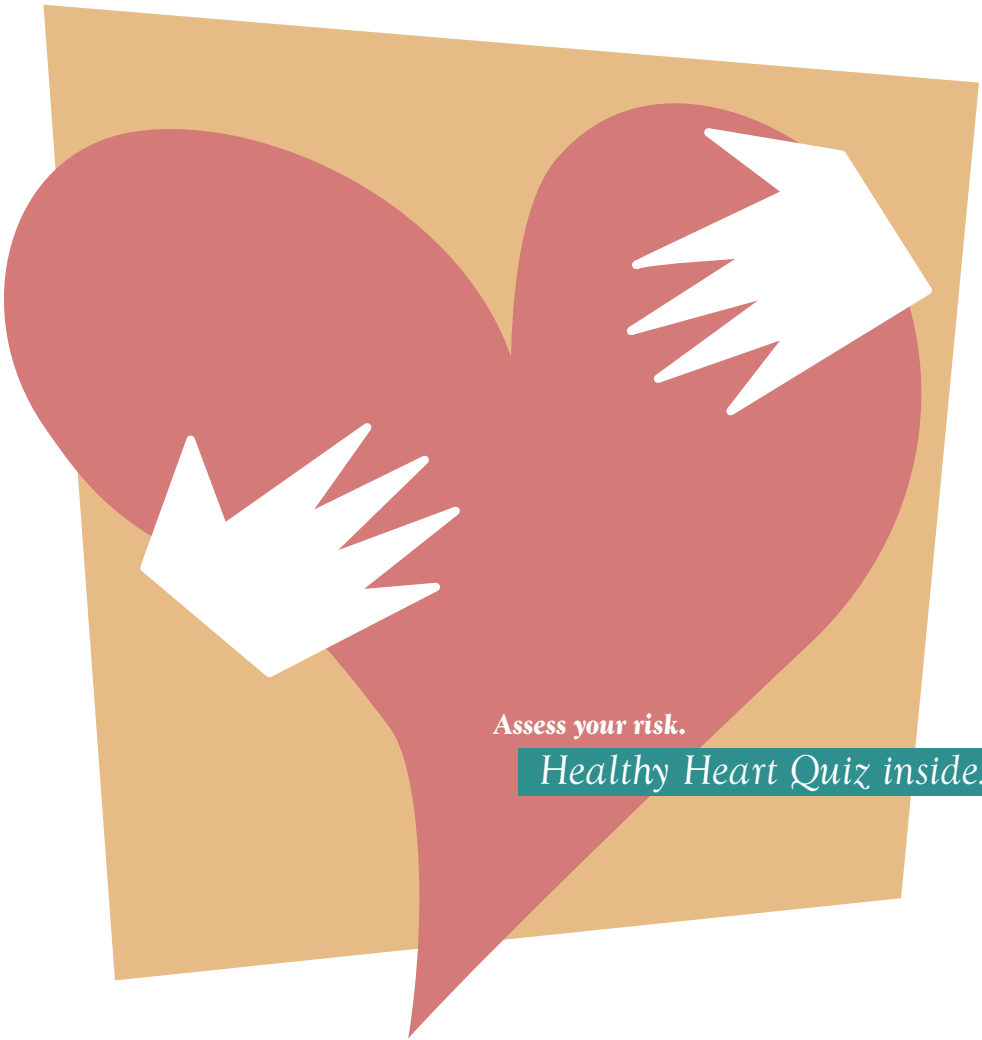


# CONDITIONS



Assess your risk.

*Healthy Heart Quiz inside.*

## HEALTHY HEART KIT *for Women*



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## The Facts May Surprise You

Chances are you haven't thought much about heart disease. You've probably heard that it's a man's problem. And that cancer — especially breast cancer — is what you really need to fear.

Unfortunately, the conventional wisdom on heart disease is wrong.

Every year, heart disease kills more women than men. And when you compare statistics, it kills more women than all cancers combined, even breast cancer.

- Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of American women.
- Women are less likely to survive heart attacks than men.
- The death rate from heart disease is declining for men, but not for women.
- Heart disease kills 10 times more women than breast cancer.
- Heart disease is a major cause of disability for women.

## Giving You the Tools to Fight Heart Disease

The best way to fight heart disease is by learning the facts, warning signs and risk factors. Reading this guide is a good start. Here you'll find information that can help you:

- Understand heart attack, stroke and other heart diseases.
- Recognize warning signs.
- Act quickly if warning signs occur.
- Determine whether you're at risk.
- Reduce your risk factors.

*Learn the facts*

# Heart Attack

A heart attack occurs when blood vessels going to the heart get clogged. Blood flow to the heart stops. The heart starts to die and can't pump blood to the rest of the body.

A heart attack usually occurs from a buildup of fatty material called plaque. Plaque formations can narrow or completely clog the vessels. (This plaque buildup is called Coronary Artery Disease). The higher your blood cholesterol level, the more likely plaque will form.

Other times, a blood clot (thrombus) suddenly blocks a heart vessel and causes a heart attack. A thrombus often occurs in blood vessels already narrowed by plaque.

## WARNING SIGNS

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, like what you see in the movies. But most start slowly, with just mild pain or discomfort. That's why it's important to learn the many signs of a heart attack:

### Classic signs

- Severe chest pain, pressure or squeezing that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and then comes back
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms or in the back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Sweating

### Additional signs more common to women than men

- Shortness of breath
- Indigestion or gas-like pain
- Nausea
- Unexplained weakness or fatigue
- Discomfort between the shoulder blades
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Sense of impending doom

**If you experience these warning signs, don't wait longer than five minutes before calling 9-1-1 for help. Get to a hospital right away. Don't wait to see whether the symptoms go away. Chew and swallow an aspirin (to thin your blood) while you are waiting for the ambulance to arrive.**

Men are more likely to have heart attacks, especially earlier in life, but women are less likely to survive them. Studies show that 44% of women die within a year after an attack, compared to 27% of men. Why? They often experience less severe symptoms and don't seek help soon enough. Women often mistake a heart attack for burning indigestion.

# Stroke

A stroke happens in the brain rather than the heart. That's why it's often called a brain attack. A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is cut off, either because of a blood clot or a brain vessel bursting. Oxygen and nutrients can no longer reach the brain. Brain cells instantly die, affecting your movement, speech and memory.

Stroke is often caused when a piece of plaque lodges itself in a blood vessel leading to the brain. Eighty percent of strokes happen this way. Stroke also occurs when a weakened blood vessel in the brain expands like a balloon and then bursts. This is called an aneurysm.

## WARNING SIGNS

About 30% who suffer stroke don't survive. That's because many people who have a stroke don't report to the emergency room until more than 24 hours after symptoms begin. Treating a stroke immediately may stop permanent damage or death. You must act quickly if you feel these symptoms, any of which may happen suddenly or go away and come back:

- Excruciating headache
- Numbness or paralysis in the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Confusion or trouble understanding
- Nausea/vomiting
- Personality changes
- Seizures
- Impaired speech
- Loss of consciousness
- Blurred vision, double vision, or vision loss
- Difficulty walking, dizziness, or loss of balance and coordination

**If you have any of these signs for three minutes, call 9-1-1. Stroke is a life-and-death emergency. Don't wait to see whether the symptoms go away.**

**If you think you are having a stroke, chew and swallow an aspirin (to thin your blood) while you are waiting for the ambulance to arrive.**

Women are more likely to die of stroke than men. High blood pressure is a woman's most important risk factor for stroke. About 60% of all women ages 65 to 74 have high blood pressure. The risk of developing high blood pressure increases if you are 20 pounds overweight, have a family history of high blood pressure, or have reached menopause.

## Aneurysm

Aneurysm is the swelling or “ballooning” of a blood vessel. This happens when there’s a weak point in a blood vessel wall. If you have high blood pressure, the weakened point can be pushed outward, forming a balloon-like bulge.

Aneurysms commonly form in these places in the body:

- Brain – Cerebral aneurysm
- Stomach – Abdominal aortic aneurysm
- Chest – Thoracic aneurysm
- Leg – Peripheral aneurysm

Injury, a birth defect or disease — such as atherosclerosis (plaque buildup) — can cause aneurysms. Aneurysms are often caused or made worse by high blood pressure.

### WARNING SIGNS

A woman can have an aneurysm that is small and not causing any symptoms. Aneurysms are sometimes detected when they grow big enough to press against a nerve. Unfortunately, growing aneurysms are the ones most likely to rupture.

With **brain aneurysms**, these symptoms sometimes occur hours or days prior to rupture:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Stiff neck

Signs of a **ruptured brain aneurysm, or stroke**, are listed in the previous section.

Signs of **ruptured stomach aneurysms**:

- Pain or throbbing in the stomach
- Severe lower back pain

Signs of ruptured **chest aneurysms**:

- Pain in the shoulders, back or abdomen
- Dry cough
- Hoarseness/loss of voice
- Wheezing
- Coughing up blood
- Difficulty swallowing

Signs of **ruptured leg aneurysms**:

- Pain/throbbing in the groin
- Pain/throbbing behind the knee

*Aneurysms need to be taken seriously since they can quickly lead to stroke and death.*

Aneurysms kill as many Americans as prostate cancer and twice as many as AIDS.

When an aneurysm bursts, the patient dies 90% of the time. However, when a large aortic aneurysm is found and operated on, the patient survives about 95% of the time.

## Cardiac Arrhythmia

Cardiac arrhythmia is an abnormal heartbeat. Either the heart beats too slowly, too quickly or unevenly. Short episodes of arrhythmia are very common, especially as you get older, and most are harmless. But if arrhythmias last for some time, they can become life threatening.

Some people are born with irregular heart rates. Heart disease, such as a heart attack, high blood pressure or an enlarged heart, can also cause arrhythmias. Yet many arrhythmias occur in people who don’t have heart disease.

These are the factors that can make you prone to arrhythmias:

- Caffeine (cola, coffee, chocolate)
- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Cold and cough medications
- Diet pills
- Recreational drugs
- Cardiac medications
- Psychotropic drugs (for mental illnesses)

### WARNING SIGNS

A prolonged irregular heart rate can cause a blood clot to form and travel from the heart to the brain, triggering a stroke or sudden death. An arrhythmia also can hinder the heart’s ability to pump blood, decreasing blood pressure, which could also lead to death.

Everyone occasionally “skips a beat.” See your doctor if these symptoms are severe and consistent:

- Throbbing
- Pounding
- Thumping
- Fluttering

With serious arrhythmias, you may feel dizzy or faint. You may also have chest pain or shortness of breath.

#### It’s important to know how to check your pulse.

Try to check it when you are resting. You can find your pulse on the inside of your wrist, on the edge closest to your thumb. With your other hand’s index and second finger, count how many beats you feel in 15 seconds. Multiply that number by four, and this will give you your heart rate per minute.

Normal resting heart rates for adults range from 55 to 90 beats per minute. As you count, make sure that the beats are evenly spaced without any skipping.

# Congestive Heart Failure

Heart failure means your heart is unable to pump blood to the rest of the body at a normal rate. When this happens, excess fluid backs up into the lungs and other parts of the body. This excess fluid is called congestion, which is why this disease is called Congestive Heart Failure (CHF).

CHF can happen at any age, but it's more common among older people. Heart failure often arises because the heart has become too stiff or is unable to contract normally. Your heart can be weakened over time by some underlying problem:

- Previous heart attacks
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Heart valve disease
- Infections/inflammation of the heart
- Cardiomyopathy (disease of the heart muscle)
- Congenital heart defects (defects you are born with)
- Coronary artery disease
- Irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia)
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Diabetes

## WARNING SIGNS

If not controlled, Congestive Heart Failure can be very debilitating. Simple activities, such as walking, eating, climbing stairs and carrying groceries, can become very difficult. If fluid continues to build up in the lungs, chances of having a heart attack increase.

CHF usually develops slowly. You can go for years without noticing symptoms. However, as the disease progresses, your heart becomes weaker and fluid builds up in your body. Common symptoms include:

- Sudden weight gain
- Breathlessness during activity, at rest or while sleeping
- Difficulty lying flat due to shortness of breath
- Persistent cough (especially at night) that may include mucus or blood
- Swelling in the feet, ankles, legs or abdomen
- Tiredness and fatigue
- Lack of appetite, nausea or indigestion
- Swollen neck veins
- Cold and sweaty skin
- Confusion, impaired thinking or memory loss
- Increased heart rate

According to *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*, a person age 40 or older has a one-in-five chance of developing congestive heart failure.

# Healthy Heart Quiz

Take a Few Minutes to Save Your Life



If you answer “yes” to two or more of the questions below, please visit your doctor to discuss your chances of heart attack or stroke. The more risks you have, the greater the possibility. You may wish to bring this quiz with you to your doctor’s visit.

Yes  No

Are you over 55 years old?

Yes  No

Have your periods stopped or have you had both ovaries removed?

Yes  No

Have your biological father or brother had heart attacks, angina (chest pain), balloon angioplasty or heart bypass (open-heart) surgery before age 55?

Yes  No

Have your biological mother or sister had heart attacks, angina (chest pain), balloon angioplasty or heart bypass (open-heart) surgery before age 65?

Yes  No

Do you have a parent or sibling who has had a stroke due to blockage in the neck artery before the age of 70?

Yes  No

Have you previously battled heart disease?

Yes  No

Do you currently smoke or are you exposed to second-hand smoke every day?

Yes  No

Do you get less than 30 minutes of physical activity on most days?

Yes  No

Are you 20 pounds or more overweight?

Yes  No

Is your total blood cholesterol level 240 mg/dL or higher?

Yes  No

Is your blood HDL ("good") cholesterol level less than 40 mg/dL?

Yes  No

Is your blood LDL ("bad") cholesterol level 130 mg/dL or higher?

Yes  No

Is your blood homocysteine level equal to or less than 13  $\mu\text{mol/L}$ ?

Yes  No

Is your blood pressure 140/90 mm Hg or higher?

Yes  No

Do you have diabetes or need medicine to control your blood sugar?

Yes  No

Do you respond to stress by smoking or overeating?



*Take the quiz*

*for women*



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