



American Heart Association 
Learn and Live.

Know Your Risk Factors

Heart Disease and Stroke

There are many types of cardiovascular diseases. Over 79 million Americans have one or more of them. Each year about 870,000 people die from them — about 36 percent of all deaths in the United States!

Heart Attacks

Every 36 seconds, someone dies from heart and blood vessel diseases, America's No. 1 killer. Since most of those deaths are from coronary heart disease — about 452,000 each year — it's important to learn all you can about heart attack. Don't ignore heart problems. It's a matter of life and death!

A heart attack occurs when the blood flow to a part of the heart is blocked, usually by a blood clot. If this clot cuts off the blood flow completely, the part of the heart muscle supplied by that artery begins to die. Here are some signs of a heart attack:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back.
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

If you have any of these signs, don't wait more than 5 minutes before calling for help. Call 9-1-1...Get to a hospital right away.

The Recovery Process

Depending on the extent of your heart attack, you may only be in the hospital a few days. But your recovery is just beginning.

- Start making changes in your life now to reduce your risk of having another heart attack. Eat healthful meals, be more physically active, and if you smoke, quit.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about how you can live as normal a life as possible. Ask questions like how soon you can go back to work, drive a car, have sex, and what to do if you have chest discomfort.
- Join a cardiac rehabilitation program in your area.

Stroke

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in America. It's also a major cause of severe, long-term disability. People over 55 years old have more chance of stroke, and the risk gets greater as you get older.

The good news is that about 5.7 million people who have had strokes are alive today. Knowing the signs is important. If you act fast and go to a hospital right away, you could prevent a major stroke or save your life!



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(continued)

Stroke and TIA ("mini-stroke") happen when a blood vessel feeding the brain gets clogged or bursts. Neither that part of the brain or the part of the body it controls can then work.

TIAs and Warning Signs

TIAs, or transient ischemic attacks, are "warning strokes" that can happen before a major stroke. They happen when a blood clot clogs an artery for a short time. The signs of a TIA are like a stroke, but usually last only a few minutes. If you have any of these signs, don't wait more than 5 minutes before calling for help. Call 9-1-1 to get help fast if you have any of these warning signs of stroke and TIA:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

Reducing Heart Disease and Stroke Risk

The risk for many types of heart disease and stroke can be reduced. Here are some key steps you can take:

- Don't smoke, and avoid other people's tobacco smoke.
- Lower your blood pressure if you need to. Treat high blood pressure if you have it.
- Eat a healthy diet low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and salt.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes on most or all days of the week.
- Keep your weight under control.
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
- Get regular medical check-ups.
- Follow your doctor's orders for taking medicine.

For More Information

Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals to learn more about heart disease and stroke. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.

Learn your risk for heart attack and stroke by taking the Go Red Heart CheckUp at www.goredforwomen.org. To learn more facts about heart disease and how to reduce your risk, visit www.goredforwomen.org/resources and select "Patient Information Sheets" under the **Health Tools** section.

