

Heartbeat

A Special Newsletter for MVP Members



Coronary Artery Disease

What is Coronary Artery Disease?

Coronary artery disease is the most common type of heart disease. It's also the number one killer of both men and women in the United States.

When you have it, your heart muscle doesn't get enough blood. This can lead to serious problems, including heart attack.

It can be a shock to find out that you have coronary artery disease. Many people only find out when they have a heart attack. Whether or not you have had a heart attack, there are many things you can do to slow coronary artery disease and reduce your risk of future problems.

What Causes Coronary Artery Disease?

Coronary artery disease is caused by hardening of the arteries, or atherosclerosis. This means that fatty deposits called plaque build up inside the arteries. Arteries are the blood vessels that carry oxygen-rich blood throughout your body.

Atherosclerosis can affect any arteries in the body. When it occurs in the ones that supply blood to the heart (the coronary arteries), it is called coronary artery disease.

When plaque builds up in the coronary arteries, the heart may not get the blood it needs to work well. Over time, this can weaken or damage the heart. If a plaque tears, the body tries to fix the tear by forming a blood clot around it. The clot can block blood flow to the heart and cause a heart attack.

What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms can happen when the heart is working harder and needs more oxygen, such as during exercise. Symptoms include:

- Angina, which most often is chest pain or discomfort, or a strange feeling in the chest.
- Shortness of breath.
- Heart attack—a heart attack is sometimes the first sign of coronary artery disease.

Less common symptoms include a fast heartbeat, feeling sick to your stomach, and increased sweating. Some people don't have any symptoms. In rare cases, a person can have a "silent" heart attack, without symptoms.



How is Coronary Artery Disease Diagnosed?

Your doctor will do a physical exam and ask questions about your past health and your risk factors. Risk factors are things that increase the chance that you will have coronary artery disease.

Some common risk factors are being older than 65; smoking; having high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes; and having heart disease in your family.

If your doctor thinks that you have coronary artery disease, you may have tests to check how well your heart is working. These tests include an electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG), a chest X-ray, an exercise electrocardiogram, and blood tests. You may also have a coronary angiogram to check blood flow to the heart.

Coronary Artery Disease: Exercising for a Healthy Heart

When you have coronary artery disease, it is very important to exercise regularly. If you aren't already active, your doctor may want you to begin an exercise program. Ask your doctor about taking part in a cardiac rehab program. Rehab can help you be more active and make lifestyle changes that can lead to a stronger heart and better health.

Even if you can only do a small amount of exercise, it is better than not doing any exercise at all.

- Talk to your doctor before beginning an exercise program. Your doctor may do an electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG) and possibly an exercise stress test to assess how much activity your heart can safely handle.

How is It Treated?

Treatment focuses on lowering your risk for heart attack and stroke and managing your symptoms. Lifestyle changes, medicine, and procedures are used.

- Lifestyle changes include quitting smoking (if you smoke), eating heart-healthy foods, getting regular exercise, staying at a healthy weight, lowering your stress level, and limiting how much alcohol you drink. A cardiac rehab program can help you make these changes.
- Medicines can help you lower high cholesterol and high blood pressure, manage angina, and lower your risk of having a blood clot.
- Procedures that improve blood flow to the heart include angioplasty and bypass surgery.

- After you start exercising, stop your activity immediately if you experience angina symptoms (such as chest pain or pressure), feel faint or lightheaded, or become extremely out of breath.
- Start an exercise program, such as walking, cycling, or jogging. Try to do moderate activity on most, preferably all, days of the week. Aim for a goal to exercise for at least two and a half hours a week.
- Exercise can help lower the chance of a heart attack.
- A complete exercise program consists of aerobic exercise, strength training, and stretching.
- Set goals you can reach. If you expect too much, you are likely to become discouraged and stop exercising.

MVP Health Care offers a condition health management program for members living with heart disease. For more information or to see if you qualify, call **1-866-942-7966**. MVP's program is based on the American Heart Association (AHA) and the American College of Cardiology's Guidelines for Preventing a Heart Attack and Death in Patients with Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease.

Information in this newsletter does not constitute medical advice. If you have questions about your health, talk to your doctor.

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Contact Us

For more information,
call **1-866-942-7966**
Monday–Friday, 8:30 am–5:00 pm
TTY: **1-800-662-1220**

We value your opinion.

Please fill out a brief, anonymous survey at **mvplistsens.com**. We will use this information to create a better experience for all of our members. All responses are 100 percent confidential. The survey only takes a few minutes to complete.

Heart-Healthy Eating

What is heart-healthy eating?

A heart-healthy eating plan is full of foods that can lower your risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. This plan can help you stay at a healthy weight and manage cholesterol and blood pressure. It is part of a heart-healthy lifestyle that includes regular activity and not smoking.

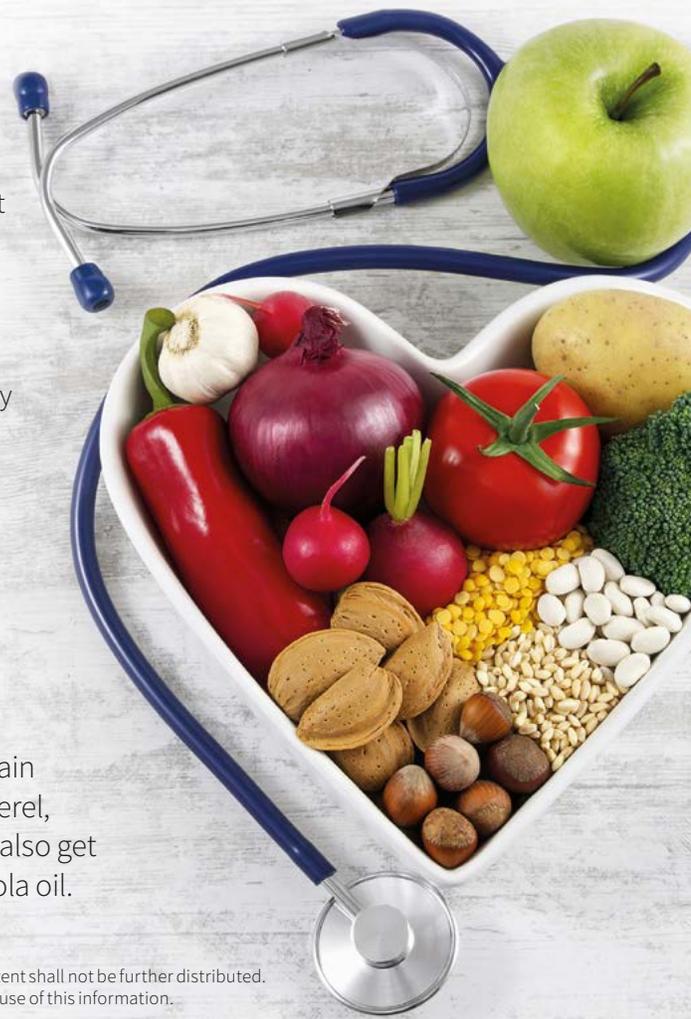
Heart-healthy eating is for everyone. It is not just for people who have heart problems or who are at a high risk for heart problems. Heart-healthy eating focuses on adding more healthy foods to your plan and cutting back on foods that aren't so good for you.

If you already have heart or blood vessel problems, such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure, specific eating plans can help you manage those problems.

A few simple ideas.

- Eat more fruits and vegetables and other high-fiber foods.
- Choose foods that are low in saturated fat and trans fat.
- Eat at least two servings of fish each week. Oily fish, which contain omega-3 fatty acids, are best. These fish include salmon, mackerel, lake trout, herring, and sardines. If you cannot eat fish, you can also get omega-3 fats from omega-3 eggs, walnuts, flax seeds, and canola oil.
- Limit sodium, alcohol, and added sugar.

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