



# Heart to heart

At risk for heart disease?  
Here's what you need to know.



Your heart works hard every minute. So it's important to take care of it, especially because heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> The good news is you can lower your risk by knowing the symptoms and making a few lifestyle changes.

## What is heart disease?

Heart disease usually involves narrowed or blocked blood vessels anywhere in the body. There are many types of heart disease, including coronary artery disease and congestive heart failure. Not all of them are an emergency, but they're all serious.

## Symptoms of heart disease

Be alert to signs like **chest pain or discomfort** when you're active, excited or stressed, or after you've eaten a big meal or been outside in cold weather. If you feel something isn't right, even if you don't have any symptoms, call your doctor.

## Checklist for a healthy heart

- Don't smoke.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Make healthy food choices.
- Be active at least 150 minutes a week.
- Keep your blood pressure and cholesterol levels under control.
- Find helpful ways to manage or reduce stress.

## Protect your heart

Talk to your doctor about your risk for heart disease.



<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: Heart Disease Facts (accessed December 2018): [cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: Heart attack signs and symptoms (accessed December 2018): [cdc.gov/heartdisease/signs\\_symptoms.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/signs_symptoms.htm).

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## Know your risk factors for heart disease

With 1 in 4 deaths caused by heart disease<sup>1</sup>, it's important to know if you're at risk. Some types of heart disease run in the family. Others are caused by an unhealthy lifestyle, such as lack of exercise or poor diet.

### Heart disease risk factors include:

- Family history of heart disease
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Being overweight or obese
- Poor diet
- Physical inactivity
- Excessive alcohol use

### Common heart conditions

- **Coronary artery disease:** the arteries get clogged or blocked and cause a heart attack.
- **Congestive heart failure:** the heart can't pump enough blood.
- **Arrhythmias or irregular heartbeats:** they feel like pounding or fluttering in your chest. They can make you feel dizzy, light-headed, short of breath, weak or tired.
- **Heart valve disease:** the valves don't work as they should.
- **Congenital heart disease:** the heart isn't formed properly.
- **Cardiomyopathy or heart muscle disease:** this causes the heart to enlarge or become less flexible.
- **Pericarditis:** the membrane around the heart gets inflamed because of infection, injury or disease.

To learn more about heart health, visit the American Heart Association at [heart.org](http://heart.org)

## 5 major signs of a heart attack<sup>2</sup>

- Chest pain or discomfort
- Pain in the jaw, neck or back
- Feeling light-headed, dizzy or nauseous
- Pain in the arm or shoulder
- Shortness of breath

If you have any of these signs, call 911.

