

How To Detect Cardiovascular Issues Before It's Too Late

The next read is an excerpt from "[The Doctor's Book of Survival Home Remedies](#)", Chapter: Cardiovascular Issues, pages 104-106:

Cardiovascular issues are wide-ranging and cause various kinds of problems.

The first thing we should discuss, though, is terminology. You'll hear people talk about heart disease with a hodgepodge of terms. In fact, coronary artery disease, cardiovascular disease, heart and blood vessel disease, and coronary heart disease are terms often used interchangeably.

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The reason is that there are different *kinds* of heart disease and people refer to them in different ways. But no matter what you call it, heart disease is the number one killer of both men and women in the United States and worldwide. Almost 18 million people around the world die every year from heart disease, accounting for nearly one-third of all global deaths.

In the United States, about 610,000 people die of heart disease every year, accounting for one in every four deaths. A matter of great concern is that heart disease, which used to be considered an old man's disease, is on the rise among younger adults – those under 40. The costs of heart disease are staggering. When you count in health care services, medicine, and lost productivity the cost comes to about \$200 billion a year.

Most heart disease is linked to atherosclerosis, which is when plaque builds upon the walls of the arteries. Your body contains about seven miles of arteries, blood vessels, and capillaries through which blood flows. When plaque builds up in them, it makes it harder for blood to get through. If the plaque breaks open, a blood clot forms and can block blood flow, causing a stroke if blood can't get to the brain, or a heart attack if blood to the heart is cut off.

Other types of heart conditions can affect the muscle of the heart, heart valves, or the heart's rhythm.

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The Silent Killer

Before we move on to the symptoms of cardiovascular disorders, it's important to review some key points about blood pressure, whether or not you've read Chapter 5 of this eBook, which is all about blood pressure.

High blood pressure, often called "the silent killer" is bad for you because it makes your heart work harder and less efficiently, and damages blood vessels and arteries. Over time, this can lead to a stroke or heart attack – neither of which you're going to enjoy.

So, it's critical to get a handle on your blood pressure. That means if it's high, ask about getting on a blood pressure medication. Keeping your blood pressure under control can add 20 years to your life. Effective blood pressure meds are one of the main reasons why we live longer than our grandparents did.



You can have your blood pressure measured at a doctor's office, and a lot of pharmacies have machines where you can do it yourself. I recommend that you buy a blood pressure cuff so you can check your pressure at home and keep track of what's going on. If it's high or you're just starting on blood pressure meds, it's a good idea to measure it three times a day until it's stabilized.

Just a word here. If your blood pressure is 180/120 or higher, wait five minutes and test it again. If it remains at that level, call your doctor right away or get to urgent care. If you experience chest pain, change in vision, difficulty speaking, shortness of breath, or other symptoms, call 911 immediately.

Remember that blood pressure often can be controlled through healthy lifestyle habits. But if a healthy diet and getting enough exercise isn't enough to keep your blood pressure under control, talk to your doctor.

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Symptoms

It's kind of tough to talk about symptoms of heart disease because they vary from person to person. Besides, many types of heart disease have symptoms that overlap with other types.

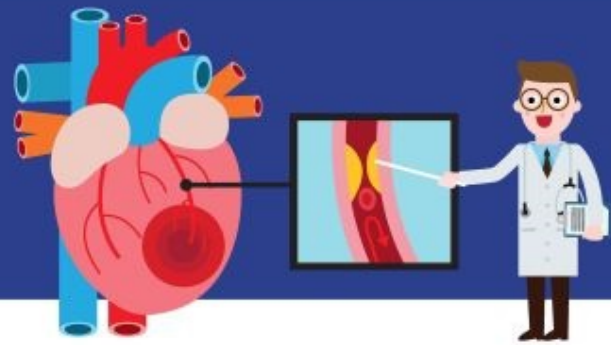
Some people have hearts that are severely damaged but experience a few symptoms. Other people might have relatively mild damage to their hearts but experience a lot of symptoms. Another cause of the difference is gender. Men often have different signs of a heart attack than women do.

So, what you're about to read are common symptoms of different forms of heart disease, but be aware that symptoms vary widely. The best thing you can do is be aware of your body and recognize any changes, like significantly increased fatigue, swelling in your ankles or dizziness and passing out.

Common Symptoms of a Heart Attack

Everybody has probably seen a movie or TV show where one of the characters had a heart attack. And, it probably looked something like this: the actor – probably a man – clutches his chest, his eyes widen with the realization of what's happening, and he sinks to the floor.

Heart attack



coronary arteries disease



Healthy artery



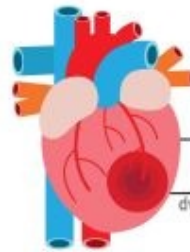
The plaque formation



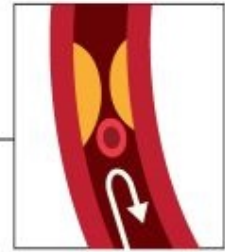
Thrombosis



healthy heart



heart failure



blocked coronary arteries

dying muscle



The truth is, if you have those symptoms, you're kind of lucky because at least you know what's going on and can possibly get help right away. The fact of the matter is almost half of all heart attacks have symptoms that are either unfelt or unrecognized, meaning you can have one and not even know it. These are called silent heart attacks, or silent myocardial infarction.

Silent heart attacks are dangerous because they can cause damage and scarring to the heart, which sets you up for another heart attack or other problems. The same risk factors apply to silent heart attacks and regular ones. We'll get to those in a bit. Meanwhile, common heart attack symptoms include:

- Pain, pressure, or discomfort in the chest, arm or below the breastbone
- A feeling of indigestion, choking or fullness

- Pain that spreads to the back, throat, jaw or arm
- Extreme shortness of breath
- A feeling of weakness
- Acute anxiety
- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Nausea, with or without vomiting
- Irregular or rapid heartbeats

Symptoms can start out mild and get progressively worse and more painful. They usually last for 30 minutes or more and don't go away when you lie down or take a pain reliever, like aspirin or Tylenol.

Common Signs of a Stroke

A stroke is a serious cardiovascular event that occurs when a blood vessel leading to the brain gets blocked by a clot or ruptures. This means that blood and oxygen can't get to that part of the brain and brain cells die. Stroke is the fifth most common cause of death in the U.S. and the leading cause of disability. Symptoms, which happen suddenly, include:

- Trouble speaking or understanding someone else
- Confusion
- Trouble walking or loss of balance
- Severe headache with no clear cause
- Numbness of the face, arm or leg, particularly on one side of the body
- Blurred vision or trouble seeing – can be one or both eyes

If you or someone you're with experiences any of these symptoms, call 911 immediately. Check the time as you do so. Speed is essential in seeking treatment for a possible stroke because getting help fast can reduce long-term disability caused by stroke.

Common Signs of Coronary Artery Disease

Coronary artery disease is caused by plaque in the arteries, which are the major blood vessels that carry blood and oxygen to your heart. Common symptoms for this condition are:

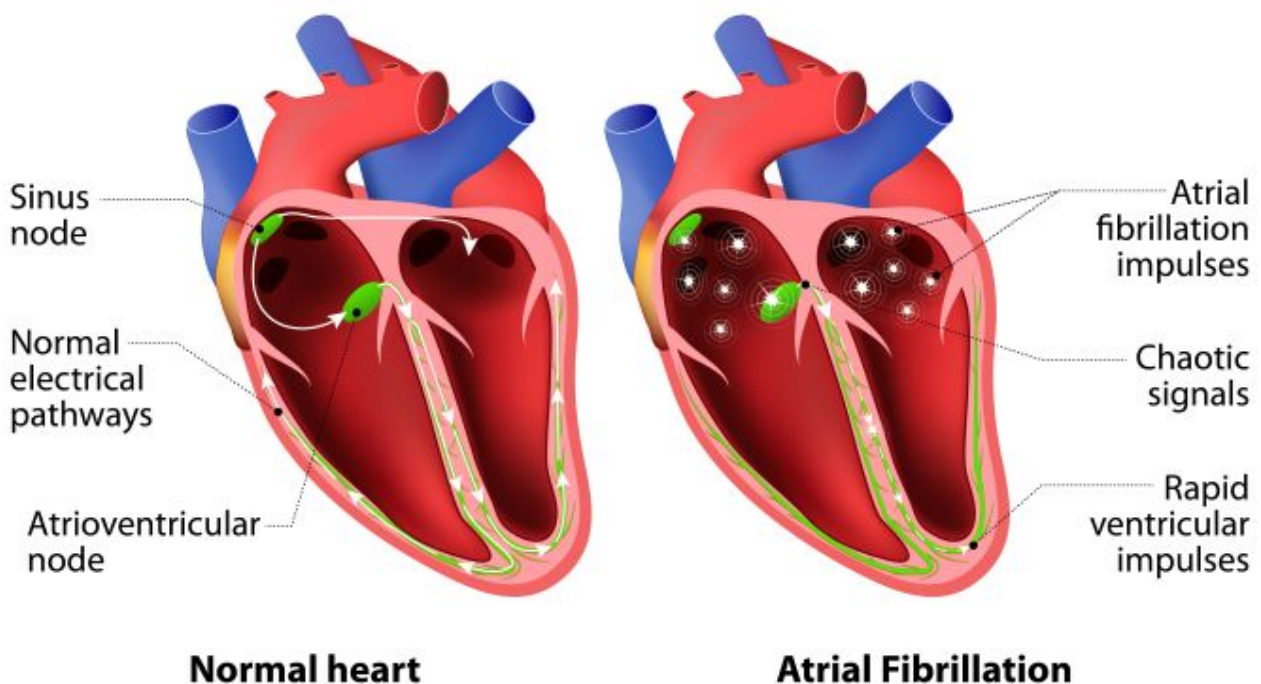
Chest pain called angina. Angina often is experienced differently in men than it is in women, and can be mistaken for indigestion or heartburn. The pain sometimes is felt in the arms, back, shoulders, neck, throat, or jaw.

When an artery becomes completely blocked, it can cause a heart attack or stroke. So recognizing and addressing symptoms is important.

Common Signs of Heart Arrhythmia

An arrhythmia is when the heartbeat is irregular, or when the heart beats too fast or too slow. When your heart beats too fast – more than 100 beats per minute – it's called tachycardia. When it beats too slow – under 60 beats per minute – it's called bradycardia.

Cardiac arrhythmia



An arrhythmia is a group of conditions, most of which aren't overly serious, but a few, like ventricular fibrillation, can be life-threatening. Atrial fibrillation is a common type of arrhythmia. Symptoms of arrhythmia include:

- A feeling of pounding in your chest
- Palpitations
- Fainting or near fainting
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling dizzy or light-headed
- Chest discomfort
- Feeling weak or very tired

Common Symptoms of Heart Valve Disease

Your heart has four valves: aortic, mitral, pulmonary, and tricuspid. The valves open and close as your heart beats, assuring that blood flows properly through the four chambers of your heart. When one or more of those valves isn't working

the way it should, heart valve disease can occur. Symptoms of heart valve disease include:

- Shortness of breath
- A hard time catching your breath when you're performing normal tasks or lying down
- Feeling dizzy
- Weakness
- A feeling of pressure in your chest when you're doing something active, or sometimes when you go outside, into the cold air
- Palpitations

Heart valve disease can lead to heart failure, stroke, or a heart attack. In some cases, however, a person has heart valve disease for many years without even knowing it.

Common Symptoms of Heart Failure

Heart failure, sometimes called congestive heart failure (CHF), affects your entire body because it makes it hard for it to get the oxygen and blood that it needs to operate. Your body conserves the blood that's available for the heart and brain to use, meaning there's less available for other organs like the liver and kidneys. Symptoms of heart failure include:

- Shortness of breath during activity
- Shortness of breath when lying down
- A persistent cough, often with a white or pink mucus
- Swelling in the legs, ankles or abdomen
- Rapid weight gain, sometimes two or three pounds in a day
- Irregular or rapid heartbeats
- Dizziness
- A feeling of weakness
- Extreme tiredness
- Chest discomfort
- Nausea

Heart failure can occur with many symptoms or with very few. The degree of symptoms experienced doesn't always correspond to the strength or weakness of the heart.

Common Symptoms of Congenital Heart Disease

Congenital heart disease can affect heart valves, the walls of the heart, and the veins and arteries near the heart, affecting the way blood flows through the heart. Congenital heart disease often is referred to as a congenital heart defect. Symptoms in children or babies may include:

- A bluish cast to the skin, lips, and fingernails. This is called cyanosis
- Rapid breathing
- Trouble with exercising
- Inability to feed properly, which results in poor weight gain
- Repeated lung infections
- Symptoms in adults often include:
 - Trouble with exercising
 - Shortness of breath
 - Symptoms of valve disease or heart failure

Common Symptoms of Heart Muscle Disease

Heart muscle disease, cardiomyopathy, makes it harder for your heart to get blood out to the rest of your body. This can lead to heart failure. There are several types of heart muscle disease. Symptoms can include:

- Swelling in the abdomen, ankles, feet, and legs
- Shortness of breath, either with exercise or while resting
- Chest discomfort
- Extreme tiredness
- Dizziness

- Fainting or feeling lightheaded
- A cough that occurs while lying down

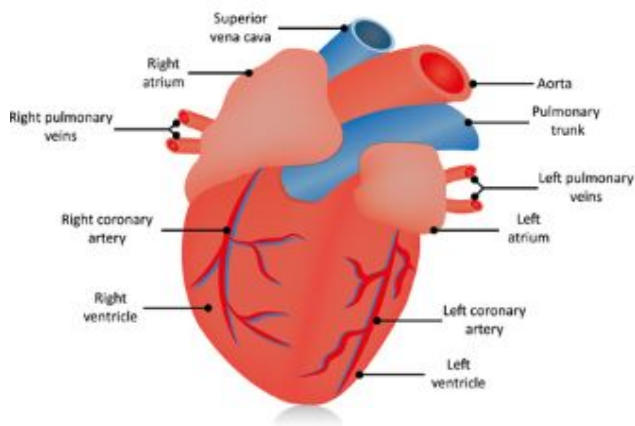
Some people experience a lot of symptoms of heart muscle disease, while others experience very few.

Common Symptoms of Pericarditis

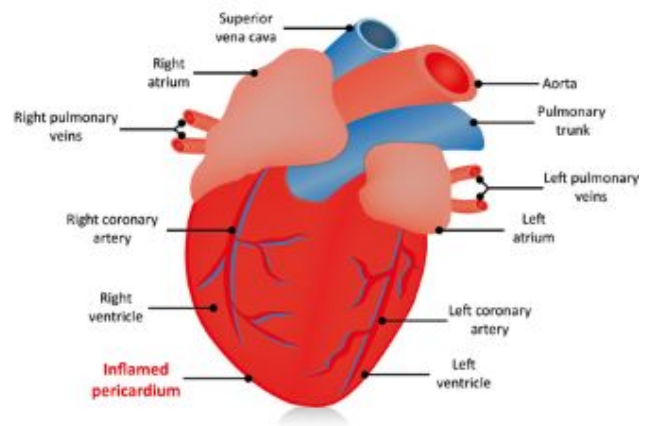
Pericarditis is an inflammation of the tissue that surrounds your heart, keeping it in place and helping it to function. The tissue can become inflamed because it gets infected, or as a result of the heart attack, other medical conditions, or injury.

Pericarditis

Healthy Heart



Heart with Pericarditis



Symptoms can include...

- Sharp pain located in the center of the chest
- A low-grade fever
- Increased heart rate
- Pain that spreads out to the neck, arms or back
- Pain that gets worse when coughing, lying down, or taking a deep breath

Pericarditis can come on suddenly, or it can develop over

time.

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Possible Causes

As with some of the other conditions you've read about, there are some risk factors for heart disease that you can control and others that you cannot. Certain medical conditions increase the chance that you'll be affected by heart disease, as do behaviors like smoking and inactivity. Genetics and family history also can be factors in your risk of getting heart disease.

Let's have a look at some of those risk factors, both the ones you can control and those you can't.

Medical Conditions that Contribute to Heart Disease

Too much low-density lipoprotein (bad cholesterol), uncontrolled hypertension (chronic high blood pressure), diabetes, and obesity all increase your chances of heart disease. Here are the reasons why.

Cholesterol



Cholesterol is a fat-like substance in your body. You actually

need cholesterol, which is produced by your liver. But, when you also eat a lot of foods that contain cholesterol, you'll have more than your body can use. So it builds up in your arteries and narrows them, making it harder for blood to get through to your heart, brain, kidneys, and other parts of your body.

Your body contains two types of cholesterol. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is bad cholesterol, and high-density lipoprotein (HDL) is considered good cholesterol because it helps protect against heart disease. High LDL levels can contribute to heart disease.

High levels of triglycerides, another type of fat in your body, also can increase your risk. We need a certain amount, but excessive levels become a risk factor.

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure affects not only your heart but your other organs, as well. There aren't many noticeable symptoms of high blood pressure, which is why it's been called "the silent killer." Blood pressure can be controlled with medicine, but being smart about what you eat and increasing your activity level also can help.

Obesity

Obesity rates have been climbing at an alarming rate in the U.S. for years. It contributes to heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other conditions. Obesity is tied to high LDL cholesterol and triglyceride levels, and lower HDL cholesterol.

Diabetes

Adults who have diabetes have a higher risk of dying from heart disease than those who don't have diabetes. And,

diabetes can complicate other medical conditions, including heart disease.

Behaviors that Contribute to Heart Disease

Human bodies are meant to move, eat natural foods, breathe clean air, and engage in other healthy habits. What you do – or don't do – can increase your risk of getting and dying from heart disease.

Bad Food Choices

If you eat a lot of saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol, your chances of dying from heart disease increase significantly. Saturated fats and cholesterol are found in all animal products. Some animal products also contain naturally occurring trans fats. But the real threat of trans fats comes from stuff like packaged baked goods, frozen pizzas, some cookies and crackers, margarine and fried foods.

Too Little Exercise

When you move around, good things happen to your body, and the chances that you'll get heart disease or end up dying from heart disease go down. A study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) figured that almost 80 percent of Americans don't get the recommended amounts of exercise, and a significant number of people don't exercise at all.

The CDC is a government agency, and I don't trust a lot of what the government says. In this case, however, I think it's probably true. As you know, too little exercise contributes to diabetes, obesity, and other disorders, in addition to heart disease.

Drinking Too Much



Experts say too much alcohol is more than one drink a day for women and more than two for men. As hard as that is to swallow, take it to heart. More than this strict daily allowance increases your risk for heart disease, as well as others. It can raise your blood pressure and it increases your triglyceride levels, which can lead to artery blockage.

Smoking

Tobacco use is a major risk factor for heart disease. Smoking cigarettes damages the heart and blood vessels, and nicotine raises your blood pressure. What's more, carbon monoxide from cigarettes decreases the amount of oxygen in your blood, meaning that less is available for your heart and other organs. E-cigarettes are reportedly even worse.

Family History and Other Factors That Contribute to Heart Disease

While you can spend more time hitting the trails or change from an animal-based to a plant-based diet, other contributing factors to heart disease are harder to change.

Family History

Your heredity factors into whether or not you'll get heart disease because genetic factors can contribute to conditions like high blood pressure. Most people also tend to inherit some of the lifestyle characteristics of their family members, like a diet that's high in saturated fats.

Your race also plays a role in your risk. If you're African-American, Native American, or Mexican-American, you are more likely to have heart disease than if you're Caucasian.

Age and Sex

People who are over the age of 65 are much more likely to have heart disease than those who are younger. Men have more heart disease overall, but a woman's chances increase after menopause.

Depression

Having clinical depression (more about that in the next chapter) also increases your risk for heart disease. With depression, you're even more likely to develop conditions like obesity, cancer, diabetes, and asthma. It's a double-whammy, because, while depression is a risk factor for heart disease, heart disease can lead to depression, especially among younger women.

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Resources

[1]

[https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cardiovascular-diseases-\(cvds\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cardiovascular-diseases-(cvds))

[2] <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>

[3]

<https://www.heart.org/en/news/2018/11/12/heart-attacks-are-becoming-more-common-in-younger-people-especially-women>

[4]

https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_heart_disease.htm

[5]

<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/changes-you-can-make-to-manage-high-blood-pressure/types-of-blood-pressure-medications>

[6]

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/the-danger-of-silent-heart-attacks>

[7]

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronary-artery-disease/symptoms-causes/syc-20350613>

[8]

<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/angina-chest-pain>

[9] <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/188837.php>

[10]

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[11] <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/heart-failure>

[12]

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cardiomyopathy/symptoms-causes/syc-20370709>

[13]

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-lipids/in-depth/triglycerides/art-20048186>