

Cardiovascular disease, often called heart disease, is a term for heart and blood vessel disease. There are many causes of heart disease, but most are related to narrowed or blocked blood vessels. This can lead to heart attack or stroke. Heart disease kills more Americans each year than any other disease. Knowledge is power, so let's set the record straight on some common myths about heart disease.

3 Common Myths about Cardiovascular Disease

1 You will have warning signs when your blood pressure is high. High blood pressure is called the "silent killer". This is because you don't usually know you have it. You may never experience symptoms. Regular blood pressure testing is the best way to know if you have high blood pressure. Early treatment of high blood pressure is critical. If left untreated it can cause heart attack, stroke, or other serious health problems.

2 You will know you are having a heart attack because you will have chest pain. Although it is common to have chest pain or discomfort, a heart attack can also have more subtle symptoms. These could include shortness of breath, nausea, feeling lightheaded, and pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the jaw, neck, or back.

3 There is nothing you can do to prevent heart disease if it runs in your family. It's true that people with a family history of heart disease are at higher risk, however there are steps you can take to dramatically reduce your risk.

Lifestyle changes can help you manage and decrease your risk of complications from many forms of heart disease. They can also help prevent further complications.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS:



Diet and Nutrition

Think about what you can do to improve your diet and commit to it. Maybe you are watching your cholesterol or your blood sugar levels. You can improve your health by pledging to:

- Eat fish twice a week
- Drink more water
- Check food cans for sodium or sugar content
- Reduce your alcohol intake
- Fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables
- Cut back on eating fast food
- Eat whole grains versus white bread or rice
- Reduce trans and saturated fats. Eat more unsaturated fats
- Compare product labels.



Exercise and Activity

Commit to what you are willing to do each week for fitness. Write down your daily activities in a log to encourage yourself to keep it up. Some examples of activities that are good for heart health are:

- Walking
- Swimming or water aerobics
- Chair exercises
- Stationary or road biking
- Stretching
- Gardening or lawn care
- Taking the stairs
- Parking farther away from the store
- Yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, or some other exercise class



Health Monitoring

You may see your doctor once or twice a year, but you live in your body every single day. In between visits with your doctor you should remain aware of your health. Here are some things you can do:

- Weigh yourself daily
- Monitor your blood pressure as often as the doctor suggests
- Stay away from people who are sick or have the flu
- Get your annual flu shot and ask about getting the pneumonia shot, too



Reduce Stress

Fit in time for you! What helps you relax should be a priority each day. This will look different for every person, but some examples are below:

- Meditate or pray
- Read
- Have lunch with a friend
- Work on your hobby, whether it's woodworking, sewing, or something else
- Get out of the house and watch the birds. Set up a bird feeder for fun.
- Get a pet
- Walk your dog