Heart Disease Fact Sheet

What is Heart Disease?

The term "heart disease" refers to several types of heart conditions. The most common type of heart disease in the United States is coronary artery disease, which affects the blood flow to the heart. Decreased blood flow can cause a heart attack. About 610,000 people die of heart disease in the United States every year–that's 1 in every 4 deaths.

What Causes Heart Disease?

Coronary artery disease (CAD) is caused by plaque buildup in the walls of the arteries that supply blood to the heart (called coronary arteries) and other parts of the body. Plaque is made up of deposits of cholesterol and other substances in the artery. Plaque buildup causes the inside of the arteries to narrow over time, which could partially or totally block the blood flow.

Signs & Symptoms

These vary for men and women. Learn more at the CDC link below.

What You Should Know About Heart Disease

- African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and some Asian Americans are at higher risk for heart disease.
- In 2013 heart disease was the leading cause of death in the United States for non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, and American Indians. For Hispanics, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, heart disease is second only to cancer as a cause of death.
- Your risk for heart disease increases with age.
- Having a history of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and/or diabetes increases your risk of heart disease.
- Tobacco use increases your risk for high blood pressure, which can affect your heart.
- Drinking too much alcohol can raise your blood pressure, which can affect your heart.
- Being overweight increases your risk for heart disease and other chronic conditions.
- A diet that is too high in sodium and too low in potassium increases your risk.
- Family history of high blood pressure increases your risk.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention