

# What is the impact of an unhealthy heart?

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An unhealthy heart significantly impacts your overall health. The most common heart disease is coronary artery disease (narrow or blocked coronary arteries), which can lead to chest pain, heart attacks, or stroke. Other heart diseases include congestive heart failure, heart rhythm problems, congenital heart disease (heart disease at birth), and endocarditis (inflamed inner layer of the heart), also called cardiovascular disease.



## What causes heart disease?

Heart disease occurs when plaque develops in the arteries and blood vessels that lead to the heart. It blocks essential nutrients and oxygen from reaching the heart and can be caused by the following:

- Blood pressure
- Cigarette smoking
- Unhealthy diet
- Lack of exercise
- Obesity
- Elevated cholesterol or triglycerides
- Insulin resistance or diabetes
- Clinical depression

## What are the symptoms of heart disease?

Heart problems do not always come with clear warning signs; however, the symptoms may include:

- Chest discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea, indigestion, heartburn, or stomach pain
- Pain that spreads to the arm
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Throat or jaw pain
- Fatigue

- Snoring
- Trouble sleeping
- Sweating
- Coughing
- Swollen legs, feet, and ankles
- Irregular heartbeat

## What are the complications of heart disease?

Complications of heart disease include:

- Heart failure
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Aneurysm
- Peripheral artery disease
- Sudden cardiac arrest

## How can I monitor and maintain living with heart disease?

- Keep your blood pressure within a healthy range.
- Check for changes in your fluid status by weighing yourself daily and checking for swelling.
- Maintain fluid balance. The more liquid you carry in your blood vessels, the harder your heart must work to pump excess fluid through your body.
- Limit your salt (sodium) intake.
- Take your medications as prescribed.

## When to consult a doctor

Consult your doctor if you think you are experiencing signs or symptoms of heart disease. Get **emergency medical help** if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Chest pain
- Fainting or severe weakness
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat with shortness of breath
- Coughing up white or pink, foamy mucus

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