

# Heart Health: What You Need to Know

“Heart Disease” is a phrase that refers to several types of heart conditions, with the most common type in the United States being coronary heart disease or coronary artery disease (CAD). CAD affects the blood flow to the heart, and decreased blood flow can cause a heart attack. About 695,000 Americans died from heart disease in 2021 — that’s about 1 in every 5 deaths.

## RISK FACTORS

High blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking are key risk factors for heart disease. About half of the people in the United States have at least one of these risk factors. Several other medical conditions and lifestyle choices can also put people at a higher risk for heart disease.

### These include:

- Diabetes
- Physical inactivity
- Overweight and obesity
- Excessive alcohol use
- Unhealthy diet

## SYMPTOMS

Sometimes heart disease can be “silent” and not diagnosed until a person experiences signs and symptoms of a heart attack, heart failure, or an arrhythmia.

### Symptoms of these events may include:

- **Heart attack:** Chest pain or discomfort, discomfort or pain in the jaw, neck or back, pain or discomfort in one or both arms or shoulders, heartburn, nausea or vomiting, extreme fatigue, dizziness, cold sweats, and shortness of breath.
  - Women tend to have more atypical and vague symptoms such as nausea and vomiting, shortness of breath, and brief or sharp pain in the neck, arm or back.
- **Arrhythmia:** When the heart beats too slow or fast or in irregular way. You may experience fluttering feelings in the chest (palpitations).
- **Heart failure:** Shortness of breath, fatigue, and swelling of the feet, ankles, legs, abdomen, neck or neck veins.



## Get emergency medical care if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Fainting

Always call **911** or **emergency medical help** right away if you think you’re having a heart attack. The sooner you get help, the sooner treatment can reduce the amount of damage to the heart muscle.



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