

Information about Coronary Heart Disease

What is coronary artery disease?

Heart disease is caused by narrowing of the coronary arteries that feed the heart muscle. Like any muscle, the heart needs a constant supply of oxygen and nutrients. These are carried to the heart by the blood in the coronary arteries. When the coronary arteries become clogged by fat and cholesterol, they can't supply enough blood. The result is coronary heart disease (CHD). Cutting off the blood supply to the heart can lead to:

- *Chest pain (angina)
- *Heart attack

Over time, CHD can weaken the heart and be a factor for developing:

- *Heart failure
- *Arrhythmias (abnormal beating of the heart)

Who is at risk for CHD?

Many factors increase the risk of getting CHD. Risk factors that cannot be changed are:

- *Age
 - In men, risk increases after age 45
 - In women, risk increases after age 55
- *Family history of early heart disease
 - Heart disease diagnosed before age 55 in your father and brother
 - Heart disease diagnosed before age 65 in your mother or sister

Risk factors that can be changed are:

- *High blood cholesterol
- *High blood pressure
- *Cigarette smoking
- *Diabetes
- *Being overweight or obese
- *Lack of physical activity

Symptoms of CHD

In some people, the first sign of CHD is a heart attack. The most common symptoms of CHD are:

- *Chest pain or pain in one or both arms or in the left shoulder, neck, jaw, or back
- *Shortness of breath

Treatment for CHD

The treatment for CHD may include lifestyle changes and medicines.

Lifestyle changes include:

- *Eating a healthy diet to prevent or reduce high blood pressure and high cholesterol
- *Exercising
- *Losing weight, if overweight
- *Reducing stress in your life
- *Quitting smoking

See Medicines used to treat CHD on the next page

Information about Coronary Heart Disease (continued)

Medicines used to treat CHD

In addition to making lifestyle changes, medicines may be needed to treat CHD. Some of the most common types used to treat CHD include:

- *Cholesterol-lowering medicines
- *Blood pressure-lowering medicines
- *Long-acting nitrates
- *Aspirin