

THE HEART OF THE MATTER: UNDERSTANDING CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Learn what defines cardiovascular disease, discover how to prevent it, and assess your risk.



Beaufort
Memorial

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE: DEFINED

Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer of men and women in the United States, but it doesn't have to turn your life upside down. Understanding the types, causes and symptoms helps you successfully prevent or manage the condition.

TYPES OF CVD

ARRHYTHMIAS

Your heart beats too fast, too slow or irregularly.

Symptoms: a fluttering feeling in the chest, feeling fatigued or weak, being dizzy or lightheaded, fainting or feeling like you might faint, rapid heartbeat or pounding in the chest, inability to catch your breath, anxiety, chest pain or pressure, and sudden cardiac arrest

HEART FAILURE

The heart muscles weaken and pump oxygen-rich blood less efficiently.

Symptoms: shortness of breath, feeling tired, and swelling of the legs, feet, ankles, abdomen or veins in your neck

CONGENITAL HEART DEFECT

The heart has a structural defect that is present at birth.

Symptoms: rapid breathing; skin, fingernails or lips that appear bluish; fatigue; and poor blood circulation in newborns. However, congenital heart defects do not always cause symptoms.

HEART ATTACK

A coronary artery is blocked and prevents blood and oxygen from reaching the heart.

Symptoms: pain or a tightness in your chest, discomfort in your upper back, neck or upper body, heartburn, nausea, vomiting, extreme exhaustion, dizziness, and shortness of breath

HEART VALVE DISEASE

Your heart has four valves. Problems with how any of these function can impede blood flow or cause it to flow improperly.

Symptoms: chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of or difficulty catching your breath, fatigue, weakness, feeling lightheaded, loss of consciousness, and swelling in the ankles, feet or abdomen

HYPERTENSION (HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE)

Your systolic pressure (when your heart pumps blood) is 130 mm Hg or higher or your diastolic pressure (your heart at rest) is 80 mm Hg or higher.

Symptoms: This condition often has no symptoms.

PERIPHERAL ARTERY DISEASE

Plaque builds up in the arteries, preventing blood and oxygen from reaching your head, arms, stomach and, most often, legs.

Symptoms: calves, hips and thighs that cramp during movement, persistent leg pain, slow-healing wounds on the feet or toes, dead tissue, one leg or foot that feels cold to the touch, poor hair growth on the legs, poor toenail growth, and erectile dysfunction

STROKE

A blood vessel is blocked by a clot or bursts, preventing blood and oxygen from reaching the brain.

Symptoms:

F—Face: One side of the face is drooping.

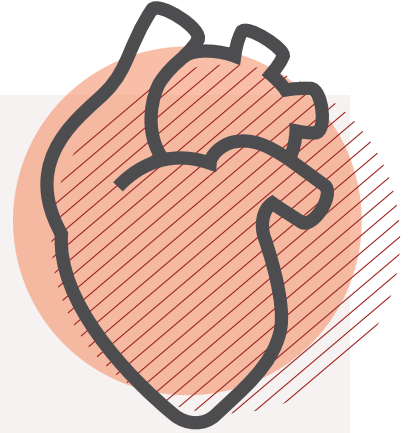
A—Arms: When lifting both arms, one shifts downward.

S—Speech: Speech is slurred or abnormal.

T—Time: Any symptoms of stroke require immediate attention. Call 911 right away.

RISK FACTORS

High blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking are the leading risk factors for CVD. Other causes include diabetes, being obese or overweight, eating an unhealthy diet, lack of exercise, and drinking too much alcohol.



Screening for CVD can save your life. [Schedule a vascular screening package that can detect strokes and other vascular conditions, or schedule a coronary artery calcium screening to learn your risk for heart attack and heart disease.](#)

PREVENTING CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Some risk factors for cardiovascular disease (CVD), including age, race, sex and family history, can't be helped. But these simple lifestyle changes can greatly reduce your risk or even help you manage your condition.

DIET



Limit your intake of salt to 1,500 milligrams per day.



If you're a man, limit sugar intake to 36 grams per day; if you're a woman, limit it to 25 grams.



Eat plenty of fresh vegetables, fruits and whole grains.



Avoid foods high in saturated fat, such as fatty beef, pork and full-fat dairy products.



Incorporate lean protein, such as fish, skinless poultry and nuts, as well as healthy fats, such as avocados and olive oil.



WEIGHT



Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight or obese is linked to high blood pressure, triglyceride and cholesterol levels, as well as diabetes, which are all risk factors for CVD.



LIFESTYLE



Incorporate 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise into your weekly routine.



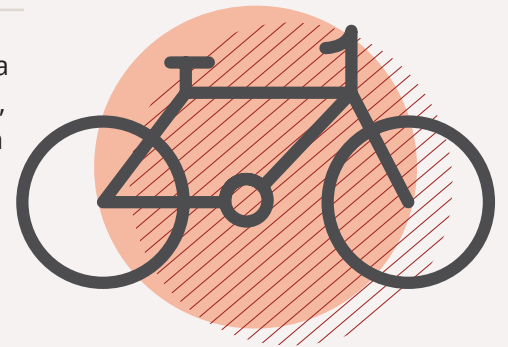
Reduce stress. Speak with a mental health professional, try meditation and create a regular exercise routine.



Quit smoking.



Have your primary care provider (PCP) check your blood pressure and cholesterol levels regularly.



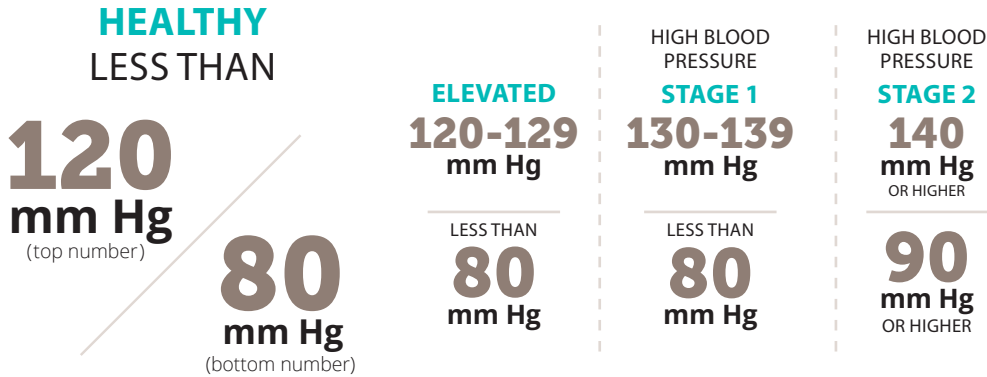
Need a PCP? [Find a provider accepting new patients.](#)

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Conditions that can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, can develop without symptoms, which is why regular monitoring is important. Learn the following indicators of heart health to avoid long-term complications.

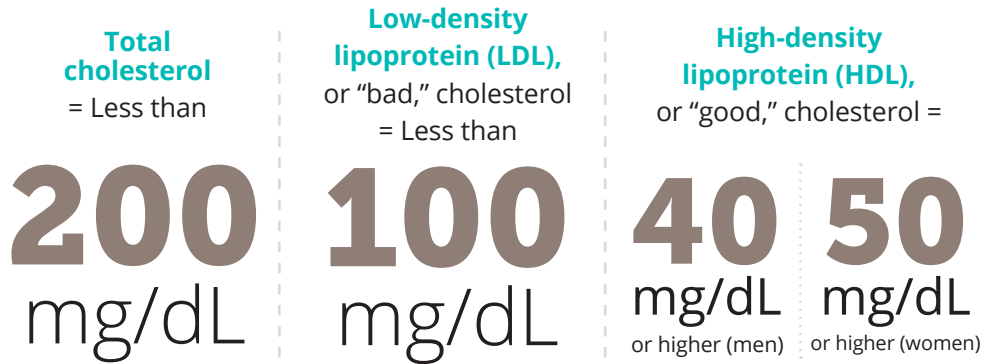
BLOOD PRESSURE

High blood pressure places extra force on artery walls, damaging the arteries and increasing your risk for a heart attack or stroke.



TOTAL CHOLESTEROL

A fat-like substance produced by the liver



BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)

A measure of your weight relative to your height



TRIGLYCERIDES

A type of fat that can contribute to narrowing and hardening of the arteries

LESS THAN
150
mg/dL

BLOOD SUGAR (GLUCOSE)

High blood sugar leads to prediabetes and Type 2 diabetes.

LESS THAN
100
mg/dL

WAIST CIRCUMFERENCE

WOMEN
LESS THAN **35"**
MEN
LESS THAN **40"**

Your primary care provider takes these measurements during an annual checkup. Schedule your next checkup with [a provider accepting new patients.](#)



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