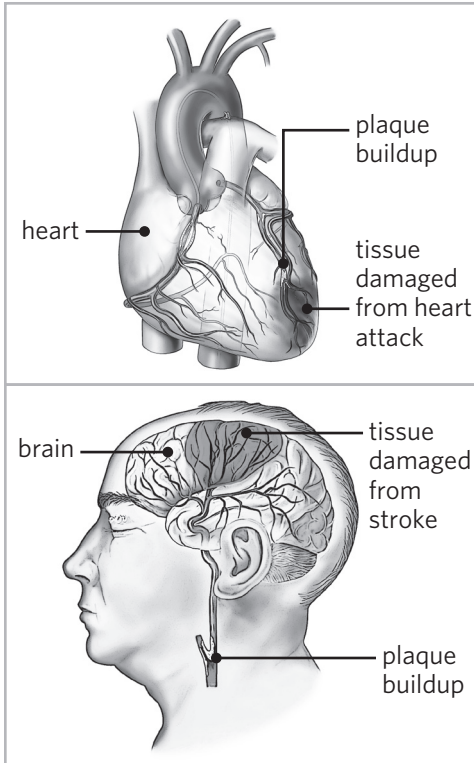


Heart Attack and Stroke: Warning Signs and Reducing Your Risk



Coronary artery disease (CAD) often causes a heart attack

or stroke. With CAD, your arteries become damaged from things like high blood pressure or smoking. When they're damaged, cholesterol can build up on the artery walls. When this buildup hardens, it's called plaque. Plaque buildup narrows the arteries and restricts blood flow.

If plaque cracks or ruptures, a blood clot can form and block blood flow to your heart or your brain. When blood and oxygen can't get to your heart, you have a heart attack. When blood and oxygen can't get to your brain, you have a stroke.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Call 911 within the first five minutes of noticing any of these symptoms:

- **chest discomfort**—You may feel uncomfortable pressure, pain, fullness or squeezing that lasts more than a few minutes or comes and goes.
- **discomfort in your upper body**—You may feel discomfort in one or both arms, your neck, jaw, back or stomach.
- **being short of breath**
- **feeling lightheaded or nauseous**

Women may also have symptoms like unusual heartburn, or feeling tired or anxious weeks before a heart attack.

Stroke Warning Signs

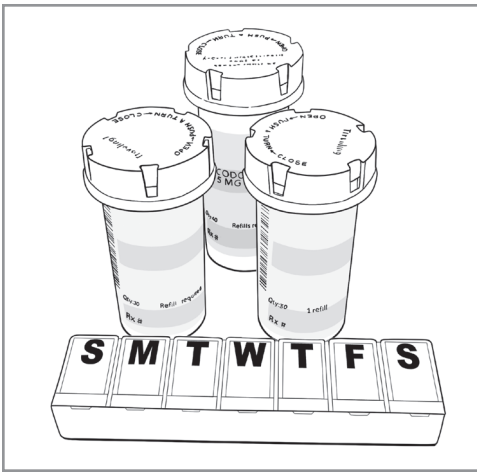
A stroke affects nerve cells in your brain, so the parts of your body that these nerves control are also affected. Symptoms include:

- **numbness or weakness in one side of your face, arm or leg**
- **trouble walking or balancing**
- **trouble talking or feeling confused**
- **loss of vision in one or both eyes**
- **sudden, severe headache**

Teach your friends and family members the National Stroke Association's Act FAST guide to help them recognize and respond to a stroke quickly:

- **Face**—Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **Arms**—Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **Speech**—Ask the person to repeat after you. Are the words slurred?
- **Time**—Time counts! Call 911 if a person shows any of these signs.

If you act **FAST**, you may be able to receive a clot-busting medicine that is effective in treating stroke. But you have to take it within 4½ hours after symptoms start.



Treatment to Reduce Your Risk

Certain conditions and behaviors increase your risk of having a heart attack or stroke:

- **high blood pressure**
- **high cholesterol**
- **diabetes**
- **smoking**
- **being overweight or obese**
- **not being physically active**

If you are at risk or have already had a heart attack or stroke, your treatment plan may include medicines to treat other health conditions including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes, and medicines to help reduce the risk of clots forming.

Taking a daily low-dose aspirin may also help, but ask your doctor first. Never start taking over-the-counter aspirin without your doctor's okay. For some people, it can be dangerous.

To learn more, visit:

- **American Heart Association**
www.americanheart.org
- **American Stroke Association**
www.strokeassociation.org
- **National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute**
www.nhlbi.nih.gov

This PatientPoint® handout may be reproduced for patient use and is provided courtesy of your doctor:

Manage Your Conditions and Habits

Take the best care of your other health conditions and make healthy lifestyle choices to help lower your risk of heart attack and stroke:

- **Lower high blood pressure and high cholesterol**—Get your blood pressure and cholesterol checked, and ask your doctor what your target numbers should be. Work with your doctor to make a plan to reach your goals.
- **Control diabetes**—Your A1C is a measure of your blood sugar control over time. If your A1C is above 7 percent, talk to your doctor about how diet, exercise and medicine can help lower it.
- **Stop smoking**—Smoking increases your blood pressure and causes damage to your artery walls. Visit smokefree.gov for tools to help you quit.
- **Lose extra weight**—Dropping pounds can reduce the amount of blood your heart has to pump so your heart doesn't have to work as hard. Start by keeping tempting, unhealthy foods out of the house.
- **Get moving**—Exercise can help lower blood pressure. Get into a regular exercise routine by partnering up with a friend and scheduling workouts ahead of time. Aim for 30 minutes, three times a week.

Remember:

- Call 911 at the first signs of a heart attack or stroke. The quicker you react to the signs, the better your chances of surviving.
- Control your other health conditions and make healthy lifestyle changes to further reduce your risk.