



February is American Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. The most common heart disease in the United States is coronary heart disease, which often appears as a heart attack.

Know Your Signs and Symptoms

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense; however, most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Here are signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

- Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath (more common in women). May occur with or without chest discomfort.

Healthy Lifestyle: How You Can Reduce Your Risk

A healthy diet and lifestyle, as well as coordinated screening with your primary care physician, are the best weapons you have to fight heart disease. Many people make it harder than it is. As you make daily food choices, base your eating pattern on these American Heart Association recommendations:

- Choose lean meats and poultry without skin and prepare them without added saturated and trans fat.
- Select fat-free, 1 percent fat, and low-fat dairy products.
- Cut back on foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce trans fat in your diet.
- Cut back on foods high in dietary cholesterol. Aim to eat less than 300 mg of cholesterol each day.
- Cut back on beverages and foods with added sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. Aim to eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day.

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