



HEART DISEASE & STROKE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is heart disease?

Heart disease refers to any disorder that affects the heart, its muscles, valves, or internal electric pathways responsible for muscular contractions.

Q: What are the symptoms of heart disease?

Many heart diseases can be 'silent', only being diagnosed when you experience symptoms. Some of these include chest pain or discomfort, upper back or neck pain, indigestion, heartburn, nausea, extreme fatigue, upper body discomfort, dizziness, shortness of breath, and swelling of the feet, ankles, legs, abdomen or neck veins.

Q: What are the risk factors of heart disease?

High blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, being overweight / obese, an unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, excessive alcohol use and genetics can all lead to heart disease.

Q: What are the risk factors for babies developing congenital heart disease?

If the baby has down syndrome, if the mother has an infection such as rubella, if the mother takes certain medications during pregnancy, if the mother smokes or drinks during pregnancy, or if the mother has poorly-controlled diabetes.

Q: What are the symptoms of congenital heart disease in children?

Rapid heartbeat, rapid breathing, swelling of the legs, tummy and around the eyes, extreme fatigue, blue tinge to the skin and lips, and tiredness during feeding.

Q: How does mental health relate to heart disease?

People experiencing depression, anxiety, stress, and even PTSD over a long period of time may experience certain physiologic effects on the body, such as increased cardiac reactivity (e.g., increased heart rate and blood pressure), reduced blood flow to the heart, and heightened levels of cortisol – all of which could ultimately lead to heart disease.

Q: If my family has a history of heart disease, is there anything I can do to increase my heart's health?

Yes! Moderate exercise a few times a week, eating a healthy diet that's low in fatty foods and cholesterol, quitting smoking and maintaining a healthy weight can all help your heart stay healthy.

Q: Does heart failure mean my heart has stopped beating?

No, heart failure simply means that your heart isn't functioning the way it should be, and is having trouble pumping blood throughout your body. Heart failure is treatable, but requires medical attention.

Q: Do I only have to worry about heart disease when I'm older?

No. What we do to our bodies now will affect us when we're older, so maintaining a good diet and exercising regularly will help prevent heart disease later in life.

Q: Should I exercise after having a heart attack?

Yes, being active helps strengthen your heart, and your doctor will help you formulate a plan that's right for you.



STROKE FAQs

Q: What is a stroke?

A stroke occurs due to a decrease or blockage in the brain's blood supply.

Q: What are the 3 main types of stroke?

The most common are ischemic strokes, making up 87%, in which a blood clot prevents blood and oxygen reaching the brain. A haemorrhagic stroke occurs when a blood vessel ruptures.

Q: What are the symptoms of a stroke?

Confusion, headache, numbness, inability to move parts of the face, arm or leg, sudden vision problems in one or both eyes, and difficulty walking.

Q: How can I learn to spot the symptoms of a stroke?

Learn the acronym 'BE FAST' – Balance (sudden trouble with balance / coordination); Eyes (sudden blurred vision, double vision or blindness); Face (drooping of one side of the face); Arm (if they try to raise both arms, one drifts downwards); Speech (slurred or unusual speech); Time (if any of these symptoms show, contact emergency services immediately).

Q: What are the treatments for a stroke?

Depending on the type of stroke, treatments range from medication and lifestyle changes to invasive medical procedures.

Q: What is the most common treatment for a stroke?

Clot removal – using a device to enter the blocked artery and remove the blocking blood clot – is now the proven standard of care for stroke, with exceptional medical benefits.

Q: What can I do to recover after a stroke?

Depending on the side effects you're experiencing, you can do speech therapy, physical therapy and/or occupational therapy, as well as joining a support group and getting help from family and friends.

Q: How can I reduce my risk of experiencing a stroke?

Eat a healthy diet, maintain a moderate weight, exercise regularly, don't smoke, and avoid alcohol or only drink in moderation.

Q: What are the risk factors for a stroke?

Some risk factors include being overweight or obese, being 55 years or older, personal or family history of strokes, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease, inactivity, smoking, excessing alcohol use and use of illicit drugs.

Q: Is aspirin an effective home remedy for a stroke?

While it can be useful for breaking up a clot during a heart attack, aspirin is not always safe for a stroke, and can actually be harmful. However, after receiving medical treatment for a stroke, aspirin can be effective in preventing another stroke.

Q: Are men more likely to have strokes than women?

No. Strokes actually occur slightly more often in women than in men. One reason is that women tend to live longer, and risk of a stroke increases as age increases.

Q: If my stroke symptoms go away, am I in the clear?

No. Transient Ischemic Attacks (TIAs), often called ministrokes, exhibit temporary stroke symptoms. Always contact your doctor if you are experiencing symptoms, as treating these early may help prevent an actual stroke.

Do you have more questions about heart disease and stroke? Speak to your doctor or healthcare provider to find out more.

