



SYMPTOMS OF HEART DISEASE

Heart disease, or cardiovascular disease, is a broad term used to describe a variety of conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels. It's important to know the symptoms of the various types of heart disease so you can take charge of your health.¹

ATHEROSCLEROTIC DISEASE² Generally, atherosclerotic disease refers to conditions that involve narrowed, blocked or stiffened blood vessels, usually due to blood clots or the build up of plaque that can lead to a heart attack, chest pain, stroke or leg pain with walking. Symptoms of atherosclerotic disease depend on which blood vessels are affected and may include:

- Chest pain (angina)
- Shortness of breath
- Sudden numbness or weakness of the leg, arm or face (stroke)
- Sudden dizziness, difficulty walking or difficulty speaking
- Pain or coldness in your legs or arms (caused by the narrowing of the blood vessels in those parts of your body)

ABNORMAL HEARTBEATS

An abnormal heartbeat, or heart arrhythmia, means your heart is beating too quickly, too slowly or with an irregular rhythm. Symptoms of heart arrhythmia may include:

- A fluttering or thumping in your chest
- A slow or racing heartbeat
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Fainting or dizziness

- Lightheadedness

CARDIOMYOPATHY³ Cardiomyopathy refers to diseases of the heart muscle. There are many causes of cardiomyopathy, including high blood pressure, infections and diabetes. In some cases, cardiomyopathy can be due to a gene you inherit from your parents. Cardiomyopathy may make the heart muscle become enlarged, thick or stiff. Or, the heart muscle can become stretched and thin.

In the early stages of the disease, you may not have any symptoms. As cardiomyopathy progresses, the heart weakens and has difficulty pumping blood throughout the body. Symptoms of cardiomyopathy may include:

- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing with physical exertion, or even at rest
- Swelling of the abdomen, legs, ankles, feet and veins of the neck
- Fatigue
- Chest pain, especially after large meals or physical exertion
- Irregular heartbeats that feel too fast, too slow or have an irregular rhythm
- Heart murmurs (extra or unusual sounds during a heartbeat)
- Dizziness, lightheadedness and fainting

VALVULAR HEART DISEASE⁴ Your heart has four valves that open and close to control blood flow: the mitral, pulmonary, aortic and tricuspid valves. In valvular heart disease, one of the heart's valves is damaged or defective. Depending on which valve isn't working properly, valvular heart disease symptoms may include:

- Chest pain
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Irregular heartbeat or heart murmur
- Swollen feet or ankles
- Dizziness or fainting

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR⁵ Earlier detection and diagnosis makes heart disease easier to treat. That's why it's so important to know the warning signs and talk to your doctor about any symptoms or concerns you may have.

1 American Heart Association. What is Cardiovascular Disease (Heart Disease)? http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Caregiver/Resources/WhatIsCardiovascularDisease/What-is-Cardiovascular-Disease_UCM_301852_Article.jsp. Accessed August 30, 2013.

2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Institutes of Health. What Are the Signs and Symptoms of Heart Disease? <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hdw/signs.html>. Accessed September 26, 2011.

3 National Institutes of Health. What Is Cardiomyopathy? <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/cm/>. Accessed January 1, 2011.

- 4 Mayo Clinic. Heart disease. Symptoms. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-disease/basics/symptoms/con-20034056>. Accessed January 16, 2013.
- 5 Mayo Clinic. Heart attack symptoms: Know what's a medical emergency. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-attack/in-depth/heart-attack-symptoms/art-20047744>. Accessed July 22, 2011.

Information provided is for general background purposes and is not intended as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment by a trained professional. You should always consult your physician about any healthcare questions you may have, especially before trying a new medication, diet, fitness program, or approach to healthcare issues.