What is Heart Disease?

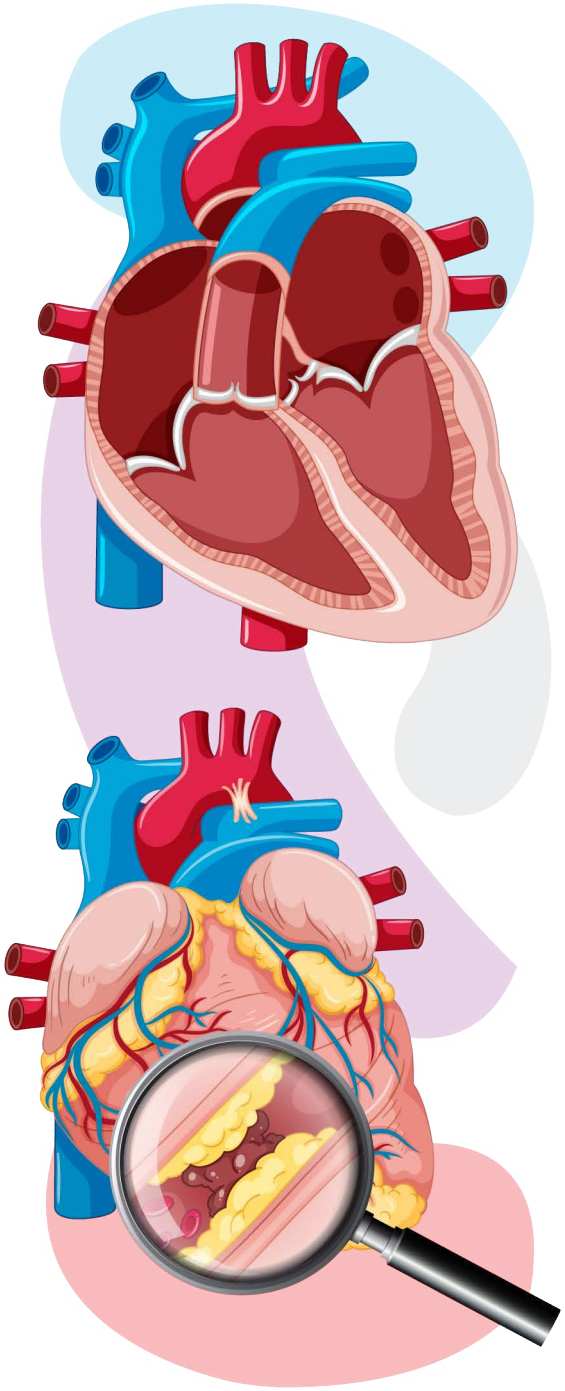
Learn more about ways to prevent and manage heart disease!

DC HEALTH
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Heart disease refers to several types of conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels. It is the leading cause of death in the District, but many forms of heart disease can be prevented or managed with healthy habits and regular care.

Types of Heart Disease:

- **Coronary Artery Disease (CAD):** The most common type caused by blocked or narrowed arteries, which can lead to chest pain or heart attacks.
- **Heart Failure:** When the heart isn't pumping blood as well as it should.
- **Arrhythmia:** Irregular heartbeat can feel like fluttering or a racing heart.
- **Heart Valve Disease:** When valves in the heart don't open or close properly.
- **Congenital Heart Defects:** Heart issues present at birth.
- **Cardiomyopathy:** Disease of heart muscle that makes it harder for the heart to pump blood.



How to Know If I'm at Risk:

You may be at higher risk for heart disease if you:

- Have a family history of heart disease
- Have high blood pressure or high cholesterol
- Have a weight related health risk (ex: Overweight and Obesity)
- Poor diet—especially high in sodium, saturated fats, and added sugars
- Are not getting enough exercise and physical activity
- Smoke or have heavy alcohol use

What is Heart Disease?

Recognize the Warning Signs of Heart Attack

- Chest pain or pressure
- Pain in the neck, jaw, arms, back, or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea, lightheadedness, or cold sweats

Call 911 immediately if you think you or someone else is having a heart

How Can Heart Disease Be Prevented?

- Eat a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains
- Limit salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats
- **Stay active!** Try to aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week.
- Quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke
- Limit alcohol use
- Get regular check-ups and monitor your blood pressure and cholesterol

How Can Heart Disease Be Managed or Treated?

- Take medications as prescribed for blood pressure, cholesterol, or heart conditions: **Remember that taking medication is a sign of strength: It shows you are taking care of yourself and working to stay healthy.**
- Follow a heart-healthy eating plan
- Stay physically active and manage your weight

Resources

For tips and resources to help you build and maintain healthy habits you can:

» **LivingWell DC:** Visit livingwell.dc.gov for tools to help you eat better, move more, manage stress, and visit your doctor.

» **DC QuitNow:** Get free help quitting smoking and vaping. Call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** or visit dcquitnow.org

» **DC Fire and EMS Department:** Get free blood pressure checks available at DC fire stations: fems.dc.gov/service/blood-pressure-program

» **LinkUDMV:** Find free and affordable blood pressure monitoring programs. Search "blood pressure" at linkudmv.org

» **Learn How to Build Healthy Habits:** Join a free nutrition or fitness class through DC SNAP-Ed. Visit livingwell.dc.gov/events or email info.snap-ed@dc.gov

» **DPR:** Get moving with programs for every fitness level at DC Parks and Rec: dprprograms.splashthat.com

» **How to Manage High Blood Pressure:** Learn what your numbers mean and how to stay in a healthy range: heart.org/en

» **Stress Management:** Find simple strategies for a calmer life: heart.org/stress-management