



# Things to Know About Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)

**Cardiovascular disease, also known as CVD, means the heart and blood vessels are not working the way they should.**

When your heart beats, it pumps blood through your blood vessels to all parts of your body. Your blood carries oxygen and nutrients, so if there is a problem with your heart or blood vessels, it means your body is not getting what it needs.

CVD kills more people in the United States than any other disease, so it is important to understand what you can do to keep your heart and blood vessels healthy.



There are many kinds of cardiovascular problems. Here are some common examples:

- A **heart attack** is when blood flow to a part of your heart is blocked. When that happens, that part of your heart starts to die.
- **Heart failure** is when your heart is not pumping blood as well as it should. The heart is still beating, but the body is not getting all the blood and oxygen it needs.
- An **ischemic stroke** is when a blood vessel that carries blood to the brain gets blocked and brain cells start to die. This is usually caused by a blood clot.
- A **hemorrhagic stroke** is when a blood vessel within the brain bursts open. This can happen when high blood pressure is not controlled.

## Know Your Risk

Certain things increase your chances of having CVD. These things are called risk factors. There are some risk factors that you can't do anything about. For example, if you have a family member related to you by blood who has CVD, you are more likely to have it too. Your risk for CVD also increases as you get older, if you smoke, and if you are overweight.

Luckily there are risk factors you can have some control over, like what you eat, your physical activity, and whether you smoke. Start taking steps to be healthy by walking or dancing, quitting smoking, and limiting foods like white rice, lard, fatty meats (pork), fried foods, and sweets.

## Make Healthy Habits



**Do something active** for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. You can do it all at once, such as a 30 minute bike ride, or break it up, such as 10 minutes of dancing or walking 3 times in a day.



### **Maintain a healthy body mass index (BMI).**

Your BMI is a measure of the size of your body using your height and weight. If you know your height and weight, you can enter them in this BMI Calculator en Español ([tiny.cc/nlymuz](https://tiny.cc/nlymuz)) or English ([tiny.cc/flymuz](https://tiny.cc/flymuz)). A healthy BMI is between 18.5 and 25.



**Maintain a healthy waist size.** Your waist circumference is the distance around your waist, just above your hips. To lower your risk for CVD, your waist circumference should be 35 inches or smaller if you are a woman and 40 inches or smaller if you are a man. If you are a transgender person, talk with your doctor about your goals.



If you smoke, **quit or cut down how much you smoke.** For help, call the NY Quitline at 866-697-8487.



**Keep your cholesterol under control.** You can't feel high cholesterol, so talk with your doctor about having your cholesterol checked. Follow your doctor's advice on how to control it if it's high.



**Keep your blood pressure under control.** The only way to know if you have high blood pressure, also called hypertension, is to have it checked. Normal blood pressure is 120/80. If your blood pressure is high, talk with your doctor about how to control it.

## For More Information

Point your smartphone camera at this QR code, and tap the link to learn more.



**English:**

Understand  
Cardiovascular Disease  
[tiny.cc/1tymuz](https://tiny.cc/1tymuz)

**Español:**

Qué es la enfermedad  
cardiovascular  
[tiny.cc/zsymuz](https://tiny.cc/zsymuz)



Memorial Sloan Kettering  
Cancer Center

**Immigrant Health and Cancer Disparities Service**

Towards Equity in Health