

# What is Cardiovascular Disease?

**FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART MONTH**, a time when you can check in on your cardiovascular health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, responsible for every 1 out of 5 deaths. While heart disease can be deadly for adults, it's also preventable in most people. Risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, obesity, an unhealthy diet and physical inactivity.



## Cardiovascular disease can refer to a number of conditions:

- ▶ Heart disease
- ▶ Heart attack
- ▶ Stroke
- ▶ Heart failure
- ▶ Arrhythmia
- ▶ Heart valve problems

## Risk Factors

Here's a list of largely preventable factors that increase your risk of heart disease:

- ▶ Having high blood pressure
- ▶ Having high cholesterol
- ▶ Smoking or drinking alcohol
- ▶ Being overweight or obese
- ▶ Having a waist measurement greater than 40 inches (for men) or 35 inches (for women)
- ▶ Having an inactive lifestyle
- ▶ Having Type 2 diabetes
- ▶ Keeping a poor diet high in saturated fat and cholesterol
- ▶ Experiencing excess stress

## Mitigating Your Risks

Use these tips to take control of your risks:

- ▶ Do not smoke or use drugs.
- ▶ Drink alcohol in moderation.
- ▶ Maintain a healthy weight and get regular exercise.
- ▶ Follow a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet.
- ▶ Limit your sodium intake to between 1,500 and 2,400 milligrams per day.
- ▶ Keep your stress levels under control.
- ▶ Schedule regular medical checkups with your primary care physician.
- ▶ Get your blood pressure and cholesterol checked regularly.

**Combining regular physical activity with a healthy diet, adequate sleep, effective stress management and avoidance of tobacco slashes your risk of heart disease and premature death dramatically. By following this guidance, you can do your part to keep your heart healthy for years to come.**