
There are many types of heart and blood vessel diseases. More than 60 million Americans have one or more of them. Each year, about 960,000 people die from them – more than 40 percent of all deaths in the United States. Yet many types of heart disease and stroke may be prevented. Here are some key steps you can take:

- Don't smoke, and avoid other people's tobacco smoke.
- Lower your blood pressure if you need to.
- Eat a healthy diet low in saturated fat, cholesterol and salt.
- Be physically active.
- Keep your weight under control.
- Get regular medical check-ups.
- Follow your doctor's orders for taking medicine.
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.

Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) include diseases of the heart and blood vessels, including stroke. Heart and blood vessel problems develop over time and occur when arteries that supply the heart or brain with blood slowly become clogged from a buildup of cells, fat and cholesterol. This buildup is called plaque. When the blood flow gets blocked, you could have a heart attack or stroke.

The most common types of cardiovascular disease are: high blood pressure (hypertension), coronary heart disease, which includes heart attack and angina pectoris (chest pain), stroke and heart failure.

Diabetes and CVD

People with diabetes are at high risk for heart disease and stroke. In fact, two out of three people with diabetes die of CVD. Untreated diabetes can lead to a lot of serious medical problems, including blindness, kidney disease, nerve disease, limb amputations and CVD.

If you have diabetes, it's very important for you to know and control your other risk factors for CVD. Doing so will help reduce your risk of having a cardiac event or stroke. Modifying life habits is the key to preventing coronary heart disease and stroke. Drug therapy may still be needed to control risk factors, especially when they're due to genetics and/or aging.

It's critical for people with diabetes to have regular check-ups and participate in diabetes self-management education or training. Work closely with your healthcare team to manage your diabetes and control other risk factors for CVD.