

AMERICA'S
HEART
HEALTH GUIDE™





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Introduction

Meet James: James is a 47-year-old teacher and a father to three boys. James has felt chest pain recently, which he thought was just stress.



Gabby is a 35-year-old nurse from Florida and a new mother to twins. At work lately, she has had stomach pain and dizziness.



At 68, Caleb is a salesman who hopes to retire soon. It is hard for him to work as much as he used to because he feels extra tired all the time.



James, Gabby, and Caleb all have heart disease.

People with heart disease come from all places, ages, jobs, races, gender, and income. They may share some risk factors, like stress. But many do not know they are at risk for a heart attack or stroke.

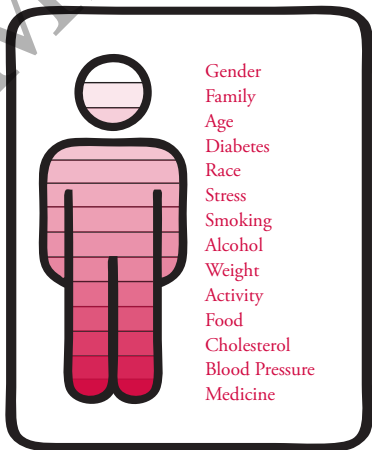


Heart disease is the top cause of preventable death in people ages 40-65.

Heart disease can feel scary, unfair, embarrassing. You may have a lot of questions or feel overwhelmed by information, statistics, and medical words. Doctor visits, tests, medicine, health care costs, and the idea of changing your lifestyle can be hard to handle.

But you are not alone. Nearly every heart patient has some of these feelings. Talk about how you feel with your doctors, friends, and family. Use this book to guide you and to record your care. Others can help, but it is up to you to make the choices that will improve your health and life.

Risk of Heart Disease

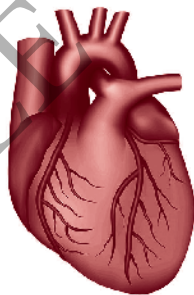


Your Heart

You probably know more about your heart than you think. Perhaps you know that the terms cardio, cardiac, and coronary all refer to the heart. The heart is a muscle. At times you may feel its beat on the left side of your chest, about 70 beats per minute.

The heart is only the size of a fist but it has two big jobs:

1. Pump blood to the lungs (where blood picks up oxygen).
2. Pump blood to the rest of the body (where blood drops off oxygen, sugar, nutrients, and more).



A normal heart

Heart disease is any problem that keeps your heart from working fully. The most common problem is a build-up of fatty material, like cholesterol, lining the walls of blood vessels. As the build-up grows, blood flow gets blocked or restricted. (Picture slow water in a clogged pipe.) The heart struggles to do its job of pumping blood. The demand for blood is more than the heart can supply.

Risk Factors

We often think we are healthier than we really are. Gradual body changes over time are hard to spot. Or we may compare our health to people near us who are not healthy themselves. Don't guess: Learn if you are at risk for heart problems by checking off the factors below that apply to you.

Factors You Can't Change

At Risk	Gender
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I'm a male (any age) or a female (age 50+). With age, women are just as likely as men to have a heart attack.</p>
	Family
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Heart problems run in my family. Record your family history on page 8.</p>
	Age
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I'm over age 65. Blood vessel walls thicken and get less flexible with age.</p>
	Diabetes
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I have diabetes. High blood sugar leads to fatty build-up in blood vessels.</p>
	Race
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I'm African American. High blood pressure rates are highest among African Americans.</p>