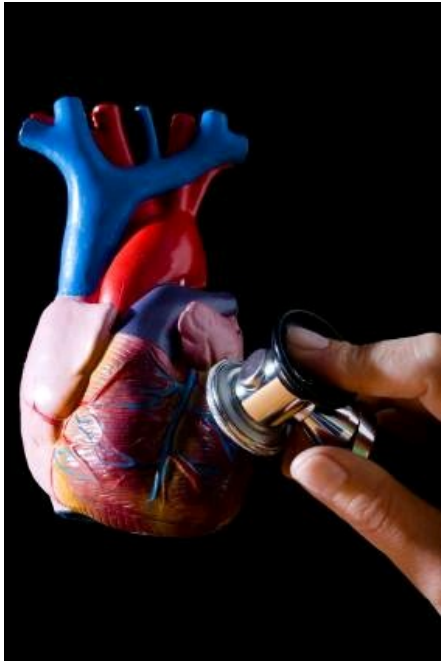


Causes of Coronary Heart Disease

By Allen Smith, eHow User



Coronary heart disease (also called coronary artery disease, or CAD) is a life-threatening disease that affects more than 14 million American men. There are a number of factors that affect who will contract CAD. Men and women with [family](#) histories of heart disease are predisposed to contracting it themselves. Hispanics, Native Americans and African-Americans are also at high risk for CAD. But the news is not all bad. Many of the factors that put people at risk for contracting CAD can be controlled through maintaining a healthy diet, [exercising](#), stopping cigarette smoking and managing stress in your life.

Choosing Your Parents Wisely

While there isn't much you can do about who your parents are, you can become aware of your family history and take steps to minimize other, more manageable risk factors. If any member of your family has died before the age of 60, you should take extra care to manage the risk factors that are within your control.

Low-Fat and Low-Cholesterol Diet

One of the easiest ways to lower your risk for CAD is to reduce the amount of cholesterol and saturated fat in your diet. Both accelerate the amount of plaque that accumulates on the inside of the walls of the coronary arteries. If enough plaque accumulates inside these arteries, you may suffer from "angina pectoris," often called chest pain or a heart attack.

If you're at risk for heart disease, particularly if you're overweight, work with a registered dietitian to find palatable ways to replace high-fat and sugar-laden [foods](#) with polyunsaturated fat and high-fiber substitutes.

Regular Exercise

If you're older than 40 or it's been some time since you've exercised, make an appointment with your doctor for a complete physical examination before you begin an exercise program. If you have a history of heart disease in the family, your doctor may recommend that you take a "stress test" to ensure that you can safely exercise at an intensity that will make a difference.

Lack of exercise has been shown to impact your cholesterol levels in ways that increase your risk of contracting CAD. Sedentary living has also been shown to decrease the efficiency of your heart, causing you to work harder than a physically fit person to accomplish the same amount of physical work.

Stop Cigarette Smoking

Smoking cessation is the most important risk factor under your control. Cigarette smoke contains hundreds of toxic chemicals that compromise the body's ability to process oxygen. Furthermore, the carbon monoxide and nicotine in cigarette smoke are potent stimulants that cause constriction of the coronary arteries and cut off blood to the heart.

Managing Stress Levels

Managing the stress in your life will also enhance your cardiac health. Studies have shown that Type A people who learn how to manage stress in their lives can significantly reduce their risk for heart disease.

