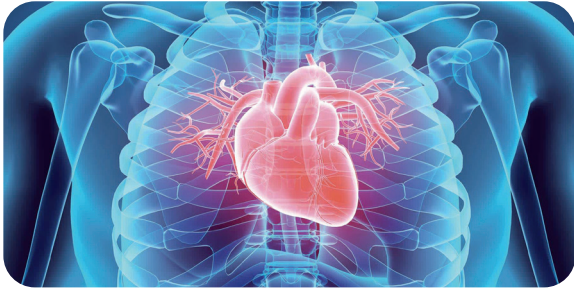


# Cardiovascular diseases



**Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs)** are a group of disorders that affect the heart and blood vessels. They are a leading cause of death worldwide and responsible for an estimated 19.8 million deaths in 2025, about 32% of all global deaths. They include conditions such as coronary artery disease, heart failure, and stroke.

## Major types of cardiovascular diseases

- **Coronary artery disease (CAD):** narrowing or blockage of the coronary arteries, often leading to heart attacks.
- **Hypertension (high blood pressure):** chronic high blood pressure that strains the heart and arteries.
- **Heart failure:** the heart's inability to pump blood effectively to meet the body's needs.
- **Arrhythmias:** irregular heartbeats, including atrial fibrillation, tachycardia, and bradycardia.
- **Stroke:** interruption of blood flow to the brain, often caused by a blood clot or haemorrhage.
- **Peripheral artery disease (PAD):** narrowing of blood vessels outside the heart, usually in the legs.
- **Heart valve disease:** damage or dysfunction of one or more of the heart's valves.
- **Congenital heart disease:** structural problems of the heart that are present at birth. These defects can involve the heart walls, valves, arteries, or veins. They can range from simple defects, which may not cause significant problems, to complex malformations.

**swelling:** *gonfiore*

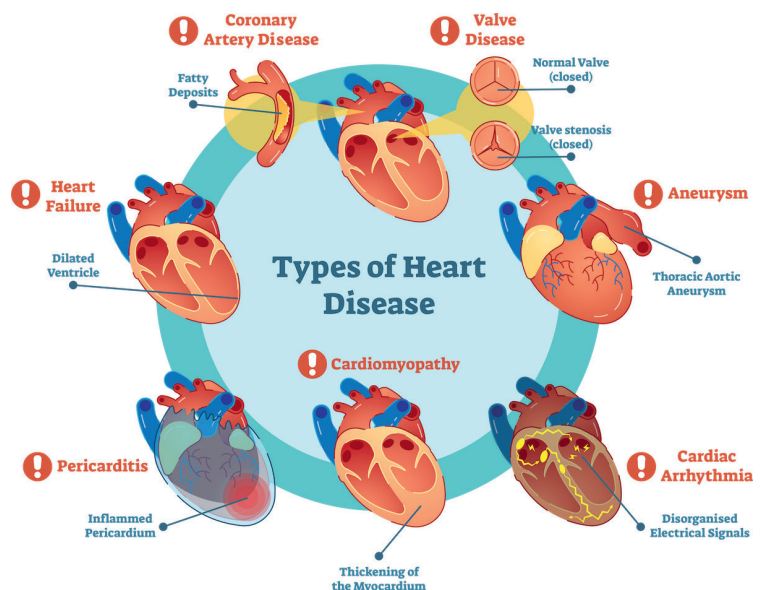
**numbness:** *intorpidimento*

## Risk factors and symptoms of cardiovascular diseases

CVDs are influenced by a combination of modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors.

**Non-modifiable factors** include age, gender, and family history, meaning that older individuals, men, and people with relatives affected by heart disease are at higher risk. **Modifiable risk factors** are those that can be controlled or managed through lifestyle changes, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, obesity, poor diet, and physical inactivity. Chronic stress and excessive alcohol consumption can also contribute to the development of heart problems. Recognising these risk factors is crucial for prevention and early intervention.

The symptoms of CVDs vary depending on the specific condition but often include chest pain or discomfort (angina), shortness of breath, fatigue, palpitations, dizziness, and swelling in the legs or feet. A heart attack may be recognised by severe chest pain radiating to the arm, jaw, or back, often accompanied by nausea and sweating. Stroke symptoms include sudden numbness, confusion, difficulty speaking, or loss of balance. Because some cardiovascular conditions can be asymptomatic in their early stages, regular medical check-ups and monitoring of blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels are essential.



## 1 Complete the sentences with the missing expressions.

- Cardiovascular diseases, the leading cause of death worldwide, affect the heart .....
- Coronary artery disease is the narrowing or blockage of the ..... and often leads to a heart attack.
- ..... is chronic high blood pressure that strains the heart and arteries.
- ..... occurs when the heart cannot pump blood effectively to meet the body's needs.
- Congenital heart disease is caused by structural malformations of the heart that are present .....
- ..... mean that older individuals, men, and people with relatives affected by heart disease are at higher risk.
- Heart problems can be caused by excessive alcohol consumption and .....
- Severe chest pain radiating to the arm, jaw, or back may be a symptom of a .....

## 2 Read the text and answer the questions.

### How to Detect Cardiovascular Symptoms and Prevent Heart Disease

Detecting cardiovascular symptoms early can save lives. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) affects the heart and blood vessels, and its warning signs should never be ignored. Common symptoms include chest pain or discomfort (often described as pressure, tightness, or burning), shortness of breath, dizziness, fatigue, and irregular heartbeat. Pain that spreads to the arms, neck, jaw, or back may signal a heart attack. Swelling in the legs, ankles, or feet can indicate heart failure. Sudden weakness, numbness on one side of the body, difficulty speaking, or severe headache may be signs of a stroke. Women sometimes experience less typical symptoms such as nausea, extreme tiredness, or mild chest discomfort.

If you notice these symptoms, seek medical help immediately. Call emergency services if chest pain lasts more than a few minutes or is severe. Early treatment greatly improves survival and recovery. Prevention focuses on healthy lifestyle choices. Eat a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats while limiting salt, sugar, and processed foods. Exercise at least 150 minutes per week. Avoid smoking and limit alcohol consumption. Maintain a healthy weight, manage stress, and get enough sleep. Regular health check-ups to monitor blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar are also essential for reducing cardiovascular risk.

Adapted from: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/21493-cardiovascular-disease>

- What are common symptoms of cardiovascular disease?
- What should you do if you have severe chest pain?
- How can regular exercise help prevent heart disease?
- Why are regular health check-ups important?

## 3 Write a text about how you would improve or maintain your cardiovascular health. Include the following points.

- Exercise: describe what type of exercise you would do (aerobic, resistance/strength training, or sports) and how often.
- Nutrition: explain what foods you would eat to support your cardiovascular system and which you would try to avoid.
- Rest: describe your sleep habits and how you would ensure you get good quality rest.
- Personal goals: explain why improving your cardiovascular system is important for you (stamina, brain function, athletic performance, or sleep quality).