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About Other Conditions Related to Heart Disease

KEY POINTS

- Coronary artery disease is the most common type of heart disease.
- There are many other conditions that affect the heart.



Conditions related to heart disease

Coronary artery disease, also called coronary heart disease or ischemic heart disease, is the most common type of heart disease, but there are many other conditions that affect the heart.

Acute coronary syndrome is a term that includes heart attack and unstable angina.

Angina, a symptom of coronary artery disease, is chest pain or discomfort that happens when the heart muscle is not getting enough blood. Angina may feel like pressure or a squeezing pain in the chest. The pain also may occur in the shoulders, arms, neck, jaw, or back. It may feel like indigestion.

There are two forms of angina—stable or unstable:

- **Stable angina** happens during physical activity or under mental or emotional stress.
- **Unstable angina** is chest pain that occurs even while at rest, without apparent reason. This type of angina is a medical emergency.

Aortic aneurysm and dissection are conditions that can affect the aorta, the major artery that carries blood from the heart to the body. An aneurysm is an enlargement in the aorta that can rupture or burst. A dissection is a tear in the aorta, which is a medical emergency. For more information, [see the aortic aneurysm information page](#).

Arrhythmias are irregular or unusually fast or slow heartbeats. Arrhythmias can be serious. One example is called ventricular fibrillation. This type of arrhythmia causes an abnormal heart rhythm that leads to death unless treated right away with an electrical shock to the heart (called defibrillation). Other arrhythmias are less severe but can develop into more serious conditions, such as atrial fibrillation, which can cause a stroke.

Atherosclerosis happens when plaque builds up in the arteries that supply blood to the heart (called coronary arteries). Plaque is made up of cholesterol deposits. Plaque buildup causes arteries to narrow over time.

Atrial fibrillation is a type of arrhythmia that can cause rapid, irregular beating of the heart's upper chambers. Blood may pool and clot inside the heart, increasing the risk for heart attack and stroke. For more information, [see the atrial fibrillation information page](#).

Cardiomyopathy happens when the heart muscle becomes enlarged or stiff. This can lead to inadequate heart pumping (or weak heart pump) or other problems. Cardiomyopathy has many causes, including family history of the disease, prior heart attacks, uncontrolled high blood pressure, and viral or bacterial infections. For more information, [see the cardiomyopathy information page](#).

Congenital heart defects are problems with the heart that are present at birth. They are the most common type of major birth defect. Examples include abnormal heart valves or holes in the heart's walls that divide the heart's chambers. Congenital heart defects range from minor to severe. For more information, see [CDC's Birth Defects website](#).

Heart failure is often called congestive heart failure because of fluid buildup in the lungs, liver, legs, and feet. Heart failure is a serious condition that occurs when the heart can't pump enough blood to meet the body's needs. It does not mean that the heart has stopped but that muscle is too weak to pump enough blood. Most of heart failure cases are chronic, or long-term heart failures.

The only cure for heart failure is a heart transplant. However, heart failure can be managed with medications or medical procedures. For more information, [see the heart failure information page](#).

Marfan syndrome. Marfan syndrome is a genetic condition that affects connective tissue, which provides support for the body and organs. It can damage the blood vessels, heart, eyes, skin, lungs, and the bones of the hips, spine, feet, and rib cage. For more information, see the [Marfan syndrome information page](#).

Mental health disorders can be short- or long-term and can interfere with a person's mood, behavior, thinking, and ability to relate to others. Various studies have shown the impact of trauma, depression, anxiety, and stress on the body, including stress on the heart.

For more information, see the [Heart Disease and Mental Health Disorders information page](#).

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) happens when the arteries that supply blood to the arms and legs (the periphery) become narrow or stiff. PAD usually results from atherosclerosis, the buildup of plaque and narrowing of the arteries. With this condition, blood flow and oxygen to the arm and leg muscles are low or even fully blocked. Signs and symptoms include leg, calf, buttock, hip, or thigh pain, and numbness in the feet. For more information, see the [PAD information page](#).

Pulmonary hypertension happens when the pressure in the arteries leading from the heart to the lungs is too high. There are many conditions that lead to pulmonary hypertension, including connective tissue disease, liver disease, emphysema, and chronic blood clots in the lungs. Symptoms of pulmonary hypertension include shortness of breath and fatigue.

Rheumatic heart disease is a complication of rheumatic fever. Rheumatic fever can develop after a sore throat caused by streptococcal bacteria. The infection can cause damage to the heart valves.

Valvular heart disease. Healthy heart valves can fully open and close during a heartbeat, but diseased valves cannot. If the heart valves are diseased, the heart can't effectively pump blood throughout the body and must work harder to pump. This can lead to heart failure, sudden cardiac arrest (when the heart stops beating), heart palpitations (rapid, fluttering, or pounding), shortness of breath, or swelling in your legs and feet. For more information, see the [valvular heart disease information page](#).

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:
[National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; About the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention](#)