

# What steps can you take to reduce your chances of developing heart disease?

## 1. Quit smoking

Smoking increases your chances of getting a heart attack

## 2. Check your cholesterol levels.

You're more likely to get heart disease if you have:

- Total cholesterol level over 200
- HDL ("good") cholesterol level under 40
- LDL ("bad") cholesterol level over 160
- Triglycerides over 150

## 3. Get active.

Get active. People who don't exercise are more likely to get heart disease, and die from it, than people who are active. Taking a jog around the block 3 times a week or doing exercise at home can reduce your risk of developing heart disease.

## 4. Control high blood pressure.

Control high blood pressure. With 6.3 million people living with high blood pressure, South Africa has one of the highest rates of hypertension worldwide. This makes South Africans more susceptible to life-threatening diseases like stroke and heart disease. Statistics show that about 130 heart attacks and 240 strokes occur daily in South Africa. This means that 10 people will suffer a stroke and five people will have a heart attack every hour. Exercise and healthy eating help. Some people may need medicine to control their blood pressure, too.

## 5. Follow a heart-healthy diet.

Follow a heart-healthy diet. Eat foods that are low in fat and cholesterol. Just about everyone should eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, legumes, and other plant-based foods. The fibre is good for your cholesterol, and you'll get vitamins the natural way, from foods.

## 6. Get to a healthy weight.

Get to a healthy weight. Losing extra weight is good for your heart. It can also help you lower high blood pressure and manage diabetes.



## 7. Control diabetes.

Control diabetes. Diabetes makes heart disease more likely. Many people who have diabetes don't know it. Get tested and get treated.

## 8. Manage stress and anger.

Manage stress and anger. Everyone has stress, and it's normal to get angry now and then. When stress and anger flare up, especially if it happens a lot, that's a problem. Managing your stress and handling your anger in healthy ways puts you back in charge.

*As High blood pressure is one of the leading causes for heart attacks and stroke all South Africans should get their blood pressure tested this September to find out if they are at risk. Along with getting their blood pressure tested, we're also encouraging South Africans to lower their salt intake, as a high salt diet is a key driver for high blood pressure.*

*Visit your on-site clinic to test your blood pressure or make sure you get tested at your next Wellness Day!*



## References

- <https://www.daysoftheyear.com/days/heart-day/>
- <http://www.world-heart-federation.org/index.php?id=123>
- <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/hearttruth/lower-risk/risk-factors.htm>
- [http://www.heartandstroke.on.ca/site/c/pv3leNWJwEb4007287k.4ACF/Heart\\_Disease\\_\\_What\\_is\\_heart\\_disease.htm](http://www.heartandstroke.on.ca/site/c/pv3leNWJwEb4007287k.4ACF/Heart_Disease__What_is_heart_disease.htm)
- <http://www.webmd.com/heart-disease/guide/heart-disease-risk-factors>

*"The state of our health reflects the food we eat, the exercise we take, the water we drink, the air we breathe."  
- Prince Charles*

This month we focus on:



## Three great tips to reduce Heart disease

1. **Control your blood pressure** - check your blood pressure annually and get treatment if it is high.
2. **Control your cholesterol** - check your cholesterol annually and get treatment if it is high.
3. **Exercise** - this does not have to be hectic, just walk your dog twice a week for 40 minutes!

Dr. RB Malkin

# World Heart Day

29 September



World Heart Day takes place on 29 September every year and provides each and every one of us with the chance for people across the globe to take part in the world's biggest intervention against cardiovascular disease (CVD). It is an international campaign to spread awareness about heart disease and stroke prevention.

The focus this year is on **creating healthy heart environments**, by ensuring that everyone has the chance to make healthy heart choices wherever they live, work and play. World Heart Day encourages us all to reduce our cardiovascular risk, and promotes a heart-healthy planet for those around us.

This is the perfect day to quit smoking, get exercising and start eating healthy, thereby ensuring that your heart is healthy and improving the health and wellbeing of people across the globe.

## WHAT IS HEART DISEASE?

Your heart is a muscle that gets energy from blood carrying oxygen and nutrients. Having a constant supply of blood keeps your heart working properly. Most people think of heart disease as one condition. But in fact, heart disease is a group of conditions affecting the structure and functions of the heart and has many root causes. Coronary artery disease, for

example, develops when a combination of fatty materials, calcium and scar tissue (called plaque) builds up in the arteries that supply blood to your heart (coronary arteries). The plaque build-up narrows the arteries and prevents the heart from getting enough blood.

## FACTS ABOUT HEART DISEASE:

- The World Heart Federation have found that heart disease and strokes are the world's leading cause of death, killing 17.1 million people every year – that's more than victims of cancer, HIV and AIDS and malaria.
- Some people are born with heart disease.
- Anyone, including children, can develop heart disease. It occurs when a substance called plaque builds up in your arteries. When this happens, your arteries can narrow over time, reducing blood flow to the heart



Risk factors are conditions or habits that make a person more likely to develop a disease. They can also increase the chances that an existing disease will get worse.

## Risk factors for heart disease:

- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Diabetes and prediabetes
- Smoking
- Being overweight or obese
- Being physically inactive
- Having a family history of early heart disease
- Having a history of preeclampsia during pregnancy
- Unhealthy diet
- Age (55 or older for women)

## HOW IS HEART DISEASE DIAGNOSED?

### EKG (Electrocardiogram)

An EKG is a simple, painless test that detects and records the heart's electrical activity. The test shows how fast the heart is beating and its rhythm (steady or irregular). An EKG also records the strength and timing of electrical signals as they pass through the heart.

### Stress Testing

During stress testing, you exercise to make your heart work hard and beat fast while heart tests are done. If you can't exercise, you may be given medicines to increase your heart rate.

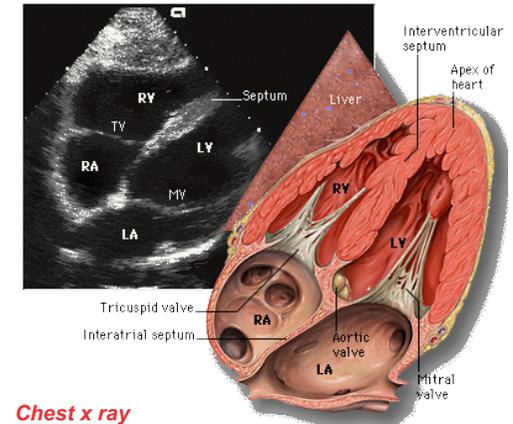
A stress test can show possible signs and symptoms of Coronary heart disease (CHD), such as:

- Abnormal changes in your heart rate or blood pressure
- Shortness of breath or chest pain
- Abnormal changes in your heart rhythm or your heart's electrical activity



### Echocardiography

Echocardiography (echo) uses sound waves to create a moving picture of your heart. The test provides information about the size and shape of your heart and how well your heart chambers and valves are working.



### Chest x ray

A chest x ray creates pictures of the organs and structures inside your chest, such as your heart, lungs, and blood vessels.

### Blood Tests

Blood tests check the levels of certain fats, cholesterol, sugar, and proteins in your blood. Abnormal levels may be a sign that you're at risk for CHD. Blood tests also help detect anaemia, a risk factor for CHD.

Coronary Angiography and Cardiac Catheterization Your doctor may recommend coronary angiography (an-jee-OG-rah-fee) if other tests or factors suggest you have CHD. This test uses dye and special x rays to look inside your coronary arteries.

