

# HEART HEALTH FOR SENIORS

HEALTH CARE AWARENESS



American Heart Month

## Protect Senior Heart Health During American Heart Month

*Since heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, especially among seniors, it is important for caregivers to know the facts.*

17.3 million deaths each year are caused by heart disease. Seniors are especially prone to cardiovascular complications. Learn about heart health to protect against this threat.

In 1964, more than half of American deaths were the result of cardiovascular disease. Although this percentage has decreased, heart disease is still the leading cause of death in the United States.

Every February is designated as American Heart Month by the federal government to encourage individuals to learn about, prevent, and address heart problems. Since seniors are especially at risk, it is important that caregivers understand heart disease.

(The American Heart Association)

### Types of Heart Health Problems

There are a wide variety of heart health problems. Cardiovascular disease is a term used to broadly describe the plethora of problems that can impair the cardiovascular system.

Specific cardiac issues include, but are not limited to:

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- High Cholesterol
- Cardiomyopathy
- Arrhythmia
- Valve Problems
- Pericarditis
- Stroke
- Heart Attack
- Heart Failure

While some of these conditions are manageable, others can be fatal if they are not handled properly. It is vital for seniors and caregivers to learn the signs of heart problems.

(The American Heart Association)

### Heart Facts for Seniors



- 42.2 million people over age 60 have a cardiovascular disease
- 51% of cardiovascular procedures were for people over age 65 in 2010
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States among seniors

#### MEN

- 70% of men between 60-79 years old have a heart disease
- Black men are at higher risk of heart problems
- The average age of 1st attack is 64.7 years

#### WOMEN

- Women between 65 and 84 are more likely to have a stroke
- Cardiovascular events tend to occur later in life for women than men
- High blood pressure is more common in women, averaging 80% for those over 75

(The American Heart Association)



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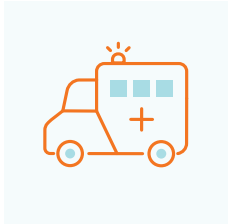
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## Signs of Cardiovascular Issues



### Symptoms That Need Immediate Medical Attention

Emergency treatment should be sought for signs of heart attack and/or stroke, such as:

- Chest pain or tightness
- Upper body pain in the jaw, neck, back or arms
- Difficulty breathing
- Sweating
- Vomiting and/or nausea
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Facial drooping
- Slurred speech
- Unconsciousness/fainting
- Anxiety
- Heart palpitations
- Fatigue
- Numbness
- Impaired vision



### Signs It Is Time to Schedule a Doctor's Appointment

Many heart conditions can be managed with regular treatment or lifestyle changes. These conditions often present with mild symptoms. Seniors should schedule an appointment with their primary physician or cardiologist if they experience symptoms of heart disease like:

- Fluttering in the chest
- Fast, slow, or irregular heartbeat
- High or low blood pressure
- Lightheadedness
- Ongoing fatigue
- Dizziness, fainting, or near fainting
- Difficulty breathing after exercise
- Lower body swelling



(Mayo Clinic), (Mayo Clinic)

## Tips for Heart Healthy Caregiving

Treatment for heart disease varies according to the specific illness. Some treatments are as simple as dieting. Others may require medication.

In general, caring for an individual with heart problems will require lifestyle changes. Caregivers can help seniors protect their hearts by:

- Reducing sources of stress
- Providing a heart-healthy diet
- Encouraging rest and taking physical activity slowly
- Creating low level exercise regimens
- Offering medication reminders
- Watching for signs of change in heart and health

(WebMD)

## Top Tips for Preventing Heart Diseases



Quit smoking



Eat a balanced diet



Maintain healthy weight



Reduce stress



Exercise regularly



### Home Care Tip:

For some seniors, heart disease can create fear and stress. Caregivers can offer support by remaining positive and offering solutions to reduce stress levels. Heart disease is not an immediate death sentence. A long life can be achieved through lifestyle changes in many cases.