

Ischemic Heart Disease

Facts for Older Adults with
Ischemic Heart Disease



This brochure was produced by Pfizer and RAND to improve the quality of care for older adults.

This information is intended for educational purposes to improve the general knowledge of ischemic heart disease.

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Ischemic Heart Disease

The leading cause of death among older men and women

What is ischemic heart disease?

Ischemic heart disease is a term for heart-related conditions caused by poor delivery of blood that carries oxygen to the heart. It is most commonly caused by blockages in the coronary arteries, the blood vessels that provide blood to the heart. Ischemic heart disease is also known as coronary heart disease and coronary artery disease, and includes *heart attack* and *angina* (chest pain or discomfort).

Heart disease usually develops over time as cholesterol and fat build up on the inside of the heart's arteries, narrowing the space through which blood flows.

Chest pain or discomfort, also called angina, may occur when not enough blood reaches the heart. A heart attack occurs when a part of the heart dies because the blood supply was blocked and there was not enough oxygen to keep it alive.

What causes ischemic heart disease?

Several conditions have been identified that may contribute to the development of ischemic heart disease. These conditions are often referred to as "risk factors." Some risk factors, such as increasing age, family history of heart disease, and being male, cannot be changed. But other important risk factors can be changed or treated. These include: being overweight or obese, smoking, inactive lifestyle, having a high cholesterol level in your blood, having high blood pressure, and having diabetes.



Facts About Ischemic Heart Disease You Can Use

Reducing risk factors may slow or stop the progression of ischemic heart disease

Lower your cholesterol

If your cholesterol level is high, lowering your cholesterol can significantly reduce your risk of having a heart attack or angina. Diet, weight loss, and exercise can reduce your cholesterol level. Medication can reduce your cholesterol if lifestyle changes don't.

Lower your blood pressure

If your blood pressure is too high, you can control it by taking blood pressure medication and making lifestyle changes such as eating a low fat/low salt diet, exercising, or losing weight.

Stop smoking

People who smoke have twice the risk of having a heart attack as nonsmokers; they are at 2 to 4 times greater risk for dying suddenly. If you smoke: stop smoking. Medications are now available to help you quit. Ask your doctor for more information.



Begin exercising

Regular exercise can help lower cholesterol, reduce blood pressure, control diabetes, and aid in weight loss. Be sure to talk to your doctor before beginning an exercise program.



Lose weight

Obesity is a risk factor for heart disease. Being overweight increases strain on the heart, increases blood pressure and cholesterol, and increases the likelihood of developing diabetes.

Control diabetes

Diabetes can result in increased weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels. Diabetes increases the risk of having a heart attack.

Aspirin therapy helps save lives

Taking daily aspirin prevents heart attack, stroke, and hospitalization for angina. Aspirin reduces the formation of blood clots, which cause most heart attacks. Daily aspirin use also reduces deaths following a heart attack.



Beta-blocker therapy reduces the risk of a repeat heart attack

Medications in the beta-blocker family lower blood pressure and heart rate. Beta-blocker therapy reduces the risk of another heart attack when given after a heart attack.



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