Heart Health

Types of Cardiovascular Disease

What are the different types of cardiovascular disease?

There are a number of cardiovascular diseases. Some directly affect the heart's structure and ability to function. Others indirectly do so by making it harder for blood to circulate through the blood vessels. Some people are born with heart or blood vessel defects (congenital), but most problems occur as a result of disease, lifestyle or age.

Some of the major cardiovascular diseases and related conditions include:

- Aneurysms: A bulge in the wall of a blood vessel. They can grow over time and eventually burst. If this happens, the rupture may cause fatal bleeding inside the body or an equally as deadly split or dissection in one or more layers of the blood vessel's wall.
- Angina: Chest pain resulting from reduced oxygen to the heart.
- Arrhythmias: An irregular heartbeat. The heart can sometimes beat too slowly (bradycardia) or too quickly (tachycardia), or it can suffer from irregular contractions (fibrillation).
- Cardiomyopathy: Disease or damage to the heart muscle, impairing its ability to pump blood.
- Congestive Heart Failure (CHF): When your heart does not pump as strongly as it should, your body doesn't get the right amount of blood and oxygen. This weakened pumping action can cause fluid to back up in your lungs and other parts of your body.
- Heart Disease: The most common form of heart disease is called coronary artery disease (CAD) or coronary heart disease (CHD) and occurs when fat and scar tissue block arteries in the heart (atherosclerosis), increasing the risk of angina and heart attacks.
- Heart Attack: Also called a myocardial infarction (MI), this injury to the heart muscle is caused

by a loss of blood supply. MIs occur when a blood clot blocks the flow of blood through a coronary artery.

- High Blood Pressure (Hypertension): An excessive force of pressure as your blood pumps through the vessels. This can lead to heart attacks, strokes, heart failure and kidney damage.

- Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD): PAD occurs when the blood vessels in the legs and arms become clogged. This can lead to limb pain and increase the risk of a heart attack or stroke.

- Stroke: Stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted, usually by a blood clot (ischemic stroke) or when a blood vessel in the brain ruptures (hemorrhagic stroke). Both can kill brain cells in the affected areas.

- Valve Problems: The heart valves, which open and close in the heart's four chambers, keep blood pumping in and out of the heart in the proper direction. They can become narrowed (stenosis) or unable to close properly (prolapse), or they can leak (regurgitation).

Last Reviewed: January 29, 2016

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