

Coronary heart disease

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Coronary heart disease or CHD is a narrowing of the small blood vessels that supply the heart with blood and oxygen. The disease develops when a combination of fatty material, calcium, and scar tissue or plaque, builds up in the arteries that supply the heart with blood. This slows the blood flow and causes chest pain. Men in their 40s have a higher risk of CHD than women. But, as women get older, their risk increases so that it is almost equal to a man's risk.

Factors that put you at a higher risk of developing CHD are, diabetes, high blood pressure, "bad" cholesterol, not getting enough physical activity or exercise, obesity, and smoking. Children with parents who have heart disease are more likely to develop it themselves. African Americans have more severe high blood pressure than Caucasians and a higher risk of developing CHD. Risk is also higher among Mexican Americans, American Indians, native Hawaiians and some Asian Americans. This is partly due to higher rates of obesity and diabetes.

Men have a greater risk of heart attack than women do, and they have attacks earlier in life. Even after menopause, when women's death rate from CHD increases, it's not as great as men's. Over 83 percent of people who die of coronary heart disease are 65 or older. At older ages, women who have heart attacks are more likely than men are to die from them within a few weeks. Treatment depends on your symptoms and how severe the disease is. There are three main types of treatment for Coronary Heart Disease: lifestyle, medication, and, for advanced atherosclerosis, special procedures.

The first two types of treatment also can help prevent the development of Coronary Heart Disease. The Lifestyle treatment has 6 main steps to help you prevent or control CHD. They are, stop smoking cigarettes, lower high blood pressure, reduce high blood cholesterol, lose extra weight, become physically active, and manage diabetes. These are all things you can do at home in your daily life. Next is Medication, in addition to making lifestyle changes, medications may be needed to prevent or control Coronary Heart Disease.

For instance, medications may be used to control a risk factor such as high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol and so help prevent the development of CHD. Or, medication may be used to relieve the chest pain of CHD. And special procedures for advanced atherosclerosis may require a special procedure to open an artery and improve blood flow. This is usually done to ease severe chest pain, or to clear major or multiple blockages in blood vessels. Coronary heart disease is high risk for Americans and is prevented by a good diet and healthy living. There is no cure for CHD, only treatments for the symptoms.