

# CARING FOR YOUR HEART

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH



ALAMEDA  
**Alliance**  
FOR HEALTH

**Dear Member,**

**At Alameda Alliance for Health (Alliance), we are here to help you take charge of your heart health. As your health partner, we created this care book. We hope it helps you stay healthy and active.**

**Best of Health,  
Alliance Health Programs**

## **CONTENTS**

### **Protect Your Heart**

Change of Heart	4
My Medicine List	7
Blood Pressure	9
Cholesterol	15

### **Heart Disease and Stroke**

Coronary Artery Disease	20
Heart Failure	22
Heart Attack	25
Stroke	28



## IN THIS CARE BOOK...

You will learn how to keep your heart and blood vessels healthy. You will also learn about common problems that can happen and how to care for your heart.

Why should you care for your heart? Your heart and blood vessels bring nutrients and oxygen to each part of your body, fueling them to work. Heart disease is when there are problems with the heart or blood vessels. A heart attack or stroke can occur if a blood vessel is blocked.

We hope what you learn in this care book will help you protect your heart.

**Please work with your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.**



## MR. H AND HIS HEART HEALTH STORY:

Mr. H was 42 years old and had high blood pressure and high cholesterol. One day at his daughter's soccer game, he felt some chest pressure that didn't go away, so he went to the emergency room. It was good that he went. Some tests revealed he'd had a heart attack! He needed open heart surgery. Thankfully, it went well.

After that, he knew it was time to change his lifestyle. He began to eat healthier, exercise more, and take charge of his health. He was also careful to avoid cigarette smoke.

Mr. H is now 69 years old and still finding ways to eat healthy and move more. Since heart disease can run in families, his family is also more aware of the importance of having a healthy heart.



## CHANGE OF HEART

You can take steps to prevent heart disease. Even if you have heart disease, these tips will help improve your heart health so that you can prevent other problems or keep your disease from getting worse.

Heart-healthy lifestyle changes are best made one small change at a time. Set goals for yourself, but don't try to do it alone. Ask your doctor, family, and friends for support to meet your goals!



### EAT HEALTHY

Practice eating a healthy and balanced diet. Include plenty of fruits and vegetables. Choose foods that are low in sugar, salt, and fats.

### MOVE MORE

Work with your doctor to create an exercise plan that works best for you. This may include exercises that make you breathe harder and get your heart beating faster (for example, brisk walking or jumping rope). Aim for 30 minutes most or all days of the week. Also, include exercises that strengthen your muscles twice per week.





## KEEP A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Talk to your doctor or dietitian about your weight. To lose or maintain weight, practice eating a healthy diet, sit less, and be more active.

To learn more, please visit [www.alamedaalliance.org/live-healthy-library](http://www.alamedaalliance.org/live-healthy-library) and select “Healthy Eating, Exercise, and Weight.”

## AVOID SMOKE

**If you smoke, quit.** For help with making a quit plan, ask your doctor or call Kick It California (formerly California Smokers’ Helpline) toll-free at **1.800.300.8086**. Medicines can also help you quit. If you don’t smoke, avoid smoke from other people.



## KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Make sure you visit your doctor on a regular basis. Ask about your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. If you need to improve your numbers, work with your doctor to make a plan.



## REDUCE YOUR STRESS

Find healthy ways to reduce and manage your stress. It helps to get enough sleep and exercise. You can also learn techniques to relax, such as breathing, mindfulness, and meditation.

## FOLLOW YOUR TREATMENT PLAN

See your doctor for checkups and take your medicine as prescribed. Keep a list of all your medicines and bring it with you to health care visits. If needed, use a pill box to organize your medicines.



## MY MEDICINE LIST

It is very helpful to keep a list of all the medicines you take. This helps you keep track of your medicine plan and tells all of your health care team members what you're taking.

### TRACK YOUR MEDICINES

This is an example of a medicine list that you can download and print from the Live Healthy Library under “Heart Health” at [www.alamedaalliance.org/live-healthy-library](http://www.alamedaalliance.org/live-healthy-library). You can also create a list like this to use.

#### When using a medicine list:

- Please list all medicine(s) you take. Include drugs, herbs, vitamins, and supplements.
- Bring this list to every doctor, urgent care, or hospital visit, and to the pharmacy.
- Don't run out of medicine. Talk to your doctor and pharmacy when you need more.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacy if you have any questions or concerns about your medicines.





Medicine Name and Dose:	This medicine is for my:	When do I take it? How much? How often?				Start Date:	Stop Date:
		Morning	Noon	Evening	Bedtime		
<b>EXAMPLE:</b> Hydrochlorothiazide 25 mg	High blood pressure	1 white pill (every day)				1/1/2024	NONE

## BLOOD PRESSURE

When you visit your doctor, they check your blood pressure. Your doctor might have told you that your blood pressure is high. What does that mean?

**Blood pressure** is the force put on the walls of the blood vessels with each heartbeat. The harder it is for blood to flow through your blood vessels, the higher your blood pressure numbers are.

If your blood pressure is high, your heart is working harder than normal. If it stays high for a long time, it can damage your heart and lead to problems like heart disease and stroke. There are often no signs or symptoms, and many people do not know they have high blood pressure. The only way to know is to check your blood pressure regularly.





## TAKING YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

Blood pressure is often checked by putting a wide band called a cuff around your upper arm. Air is pumped into the cuff. Your blood pressure is measured as the air is let out of the cuff.

### Tips for taking your blood pressure:

- Don't eat or drink anything, smoke, or exercise 30 minutes before you take your blood pressure.
- Empty your bladder before your reading.
- Sit in a comfortable chair with your back supported for at least 5 minutes before your reading. Put both feet flat on the ground and keep your legs uncrossed.
- Rest your arm with the cuff on a table at chest height. Make sure the blood pressure cuff is snug but not too tight. The cuff should be against your bare skin, not over clothing.
- Do not talk while your blood pressure is being measured.
- If you are tracking your blood pressure at home, take your blood pressure at the same time every day. Take at least two readings, 1 or 2 minutes apart.

## BLOOD PRESSURE NUMBERS

Blood pressure is measured as one number over a second number. You may hear your doctor say “110 over 72”, for example.

- The top number is higher and is called the **systolic** reading. It is the pressure in the blood vessels when the heart pumps.
- The bottom number is lower and is called the **diastolic** reading. It is the pressure in the blood vessels when the heart rests between beats.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
Normal	Less than 120	and	Less than 80
Elevated	120-129	and	Less than 80
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	130-139	or	80-89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
Very High Blood Pressure (consult your doctor immediately)	Higher than 180	and/or	Higher than 120

## NORMAL BLOOD PRESSURE

Normal blood pressure is when the top number is *less than 120* (systolic) and the bottom number is *less than 80* (diastolic). Each person's blood pressure changes from hour to hour and day to day.

## HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

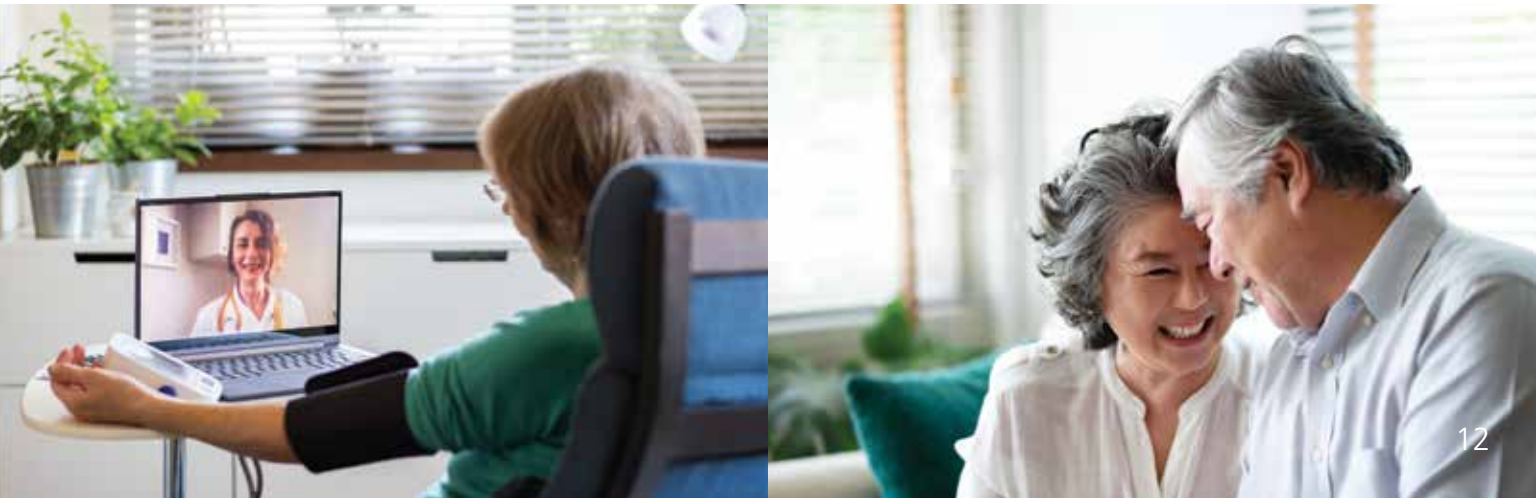
High blood pressure is also called **hypertension**. High blood pressure is *130 or higher over 80 or higher*. A diagnosis of high blood pressure is not made until your blood pressure is checked several times and stays high.

## VERY HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Your blood pressure is very high if the top blood pressure number is *higher than 180* or the bottom is *higher than 120*.

If you also have symptoms like chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness or weakness, change in vision, or difficulty speaking, this is an emergency. **Call 9-1-1 right away.**

If you do not have any of these symptoms, wait 5 minutes and try again. If the second reading is just as high, **consult your doctor right away.** Your doctor may just decide to change your medicine.



## BLOOD PRESSURE CONTROL

You can make changes that will help you control your blood pressure:

- Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Exercise on most days.
- Find healthy ways to reduce and manage your stress.
- Limit or quit alcohol.
- Limit salt or sodium in your food and drinks.
- Quit smoking, if you smoke.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Take your blood pressure medicine as prescribed by your doctor, even if your blood pressure is normal.
- Talk with your doctor about how often you should measure your blood pressure.



## IS IT SALT, OR IS IT SODIUM?

“Sodium” is the chemical name for salt. You can see it listed on food labels.

The body needs a small amount of sodium to work, but almost all of us eat too much salt. That salt comes mostly from processed foods or eating out.

Diets high in salt can raise blood pressure. When you reduce salt, blood pressure can begin falling within weeks.

## TO EAT LESS SALT

### Choose more:

- Fresh herbs or garlic
- Fresh or frozen vegetables and fruit
- Lemon juice and vinegar
- Low-fat dairy products (yogurt and milk)
- Low-sodium seasoning blends
- Salt-free or low-sodium foods

### Eat less:

- Fast food
- Processed cheeses and meats
- Snack foods

### Use less:

- Garlic/onion salt
- Salt in recipes
- Soy sauce
- Steak sauce and meat tenderizers



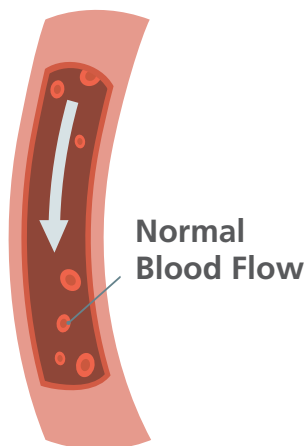
## CHOLESTEROL

**Cholesterol** is important to check and keep under control for your heart health. Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that your body needs to work. Your liver makes all the cholesterol you need. It is also found in food that comes from animals, such as meat, eggs, milk products, and lard.

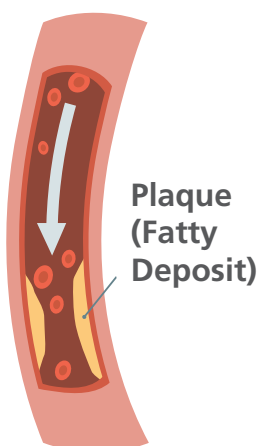
Having too much cholesterol in your blood may increase your risk for heart disease and stroke.

High cholesterol most often has no signs or symptoms. The only way to know is to get a blood test. Ask your doctor how often you should check your cholesterol.

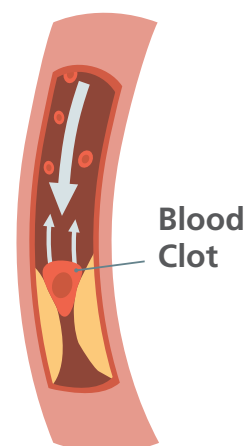
**NORMAL ARTERY**



**PLAQUE BUILDING UP**



**NARROWED ARTERY BLOCKED BY A BLOOD CLOT**





## CHOLESTEROL NUMBERS

The test results show your levels of these types of cholesterols and fat:

### Your LDL (“bad”) blood cholesterol level

This can build up on walls of blood vessels and reduce blood flow.

The lower the number, the better.

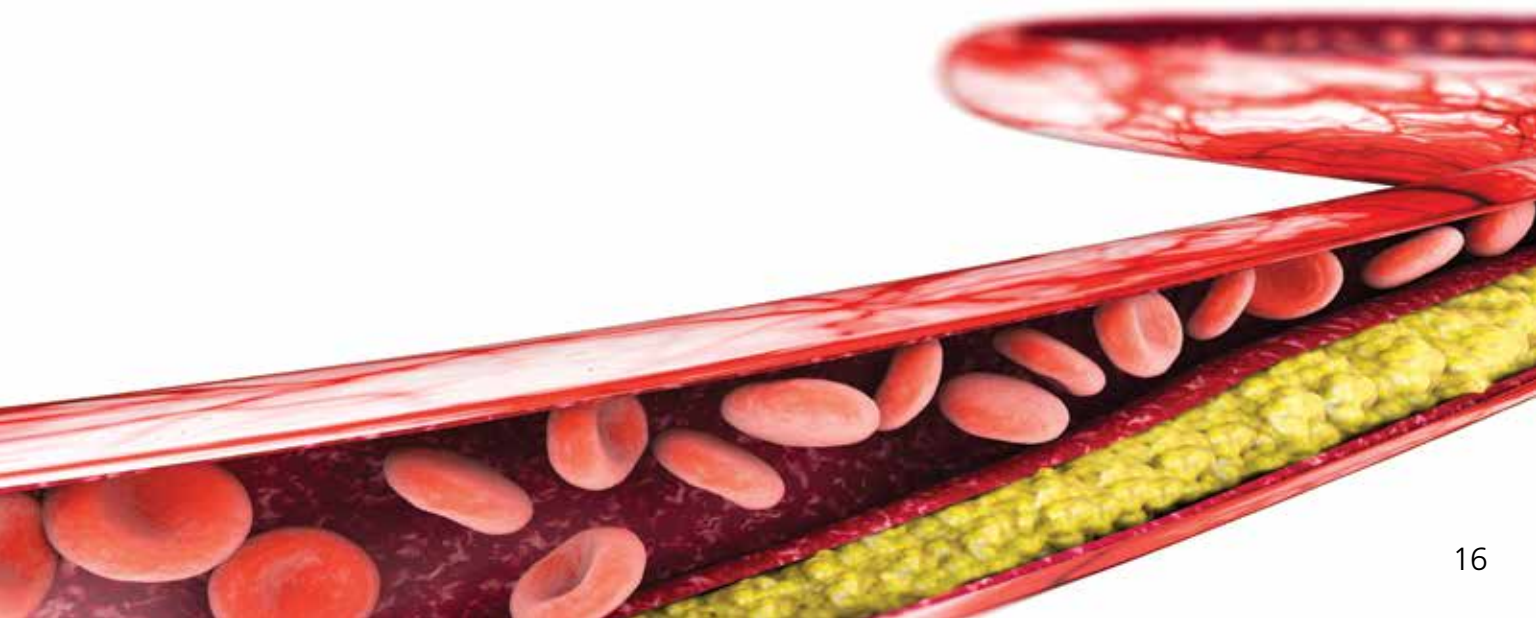
- *Less than 100* is best.
- Work with your doctor to create a treatment plan if your level is 130 and above.

### Your HDL (“good”) blood cholesterol level

This helps take extra cholesterol in your blood back to your liver, so your body can get rid of it.

The higher the number, the better.

- A level of *60 and above* protects against heart disease.
- Work with your doctor to create a treatment plan if your level is less than 40.



### **Your total cholesterol blood level**

This is the total of the HDL and LDL cholesterol in your blood.

- *Less than 200* is best, but it depends on your HDL and LDL levels.

### **Your triglyceride blood level**

This is the most common type of fat in the body.

High levels may increase the risk of heart disease.

- *Less than 150* is best.
- Talk to your doctor about treatment if your level is *200 and above*.



## CHOLESTEROL CONTROL

Your doctor will use these numbers along with knowledge of your health to recommend what steps you should take to lower your risk for heart disease and stroke.

### Follow your care plan

- See your doctor and get your cholesterol checked regularly.
- Take medicine as prescribed by your doctor.
- Work with your doctor, nurse, or dietitian to create a diet and exercise plan. Reach and maintain a healthy weight.





### Choose more:

- Food high in fiber, such as beans, fresh fruits and vegetables, and whole grains.
- Food that has healthy unsaturated fats, such as avocado, fish, nuts, and olive oil.
- Fresh instead of processed foods.
- Low-fat foods, such as fish, skim milk, and skinless chicken breast.

### Eat less:

- Food that contains cholesterol and saturated fats, such as butter, cheese, fatty meat, lard, and whole milk.
- Fried food. Try baking, grilling, or steaming food instead.
- Processed foods with trans fats. Check food labels and avoid foods with “hydrogenated oils” in the ingredients list.

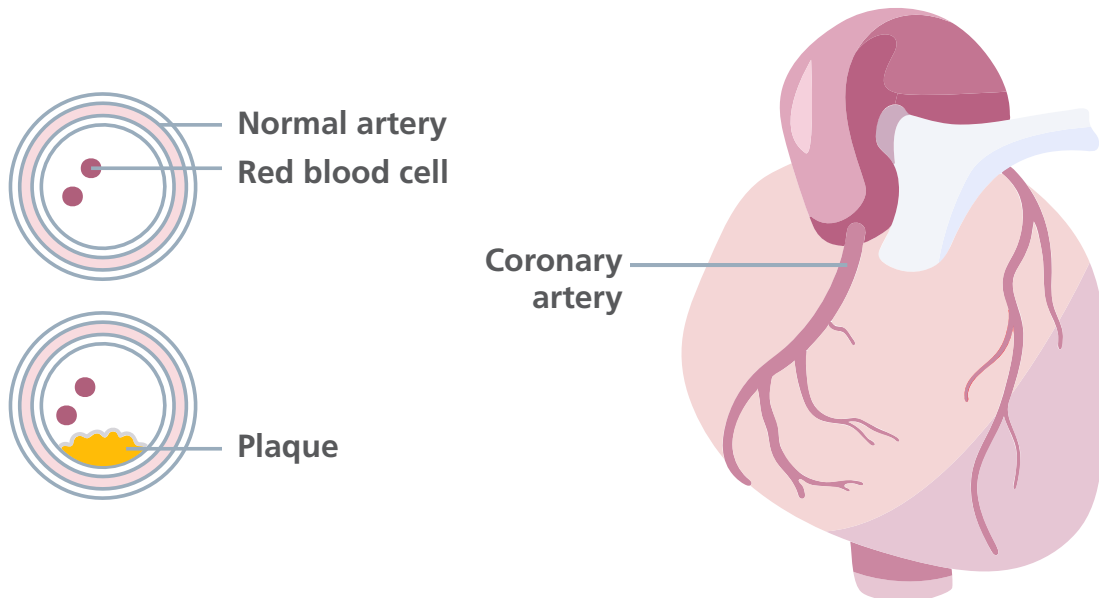
## CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE (CAD)

**Coronary artery disease (CAD)** is the most common type of heart disease. With CAD, the blood vessels (arteries) that supply blood to the heart muscle become hardened and narrowed. This is caused by the buildup of fatty deposits called plaque in the blood vessels. The buildup is called **atherosclerosis** (ath-uh-roh-skluh-roh-sis).

As the plaque builds up in the blood vessels, blood flow to the heart muscle is decreased. Chest pain (angina), shortness of breath, or other signs may occur.

If the blood flow is stopped or blocked, it causes a heart attack. Over time, CAD can weaken the heart muscle and cause heart failure.

For some people, a heart attack is their first sign of CAD. If you are at high risk for heart disease or have symptoms, your doctor can do tests to see if you have CAD.



## YOUR CARE

The goal is to improve blood flow to your heart muscle and decrease your risk of heart attack.

Treatments may include:

- Cardiac rehab program
- Diet low in fat and salt
- Exercise
- Medicines
- Quitting smoking, if you smoke
- Reaching a healthy weight
- Surgery



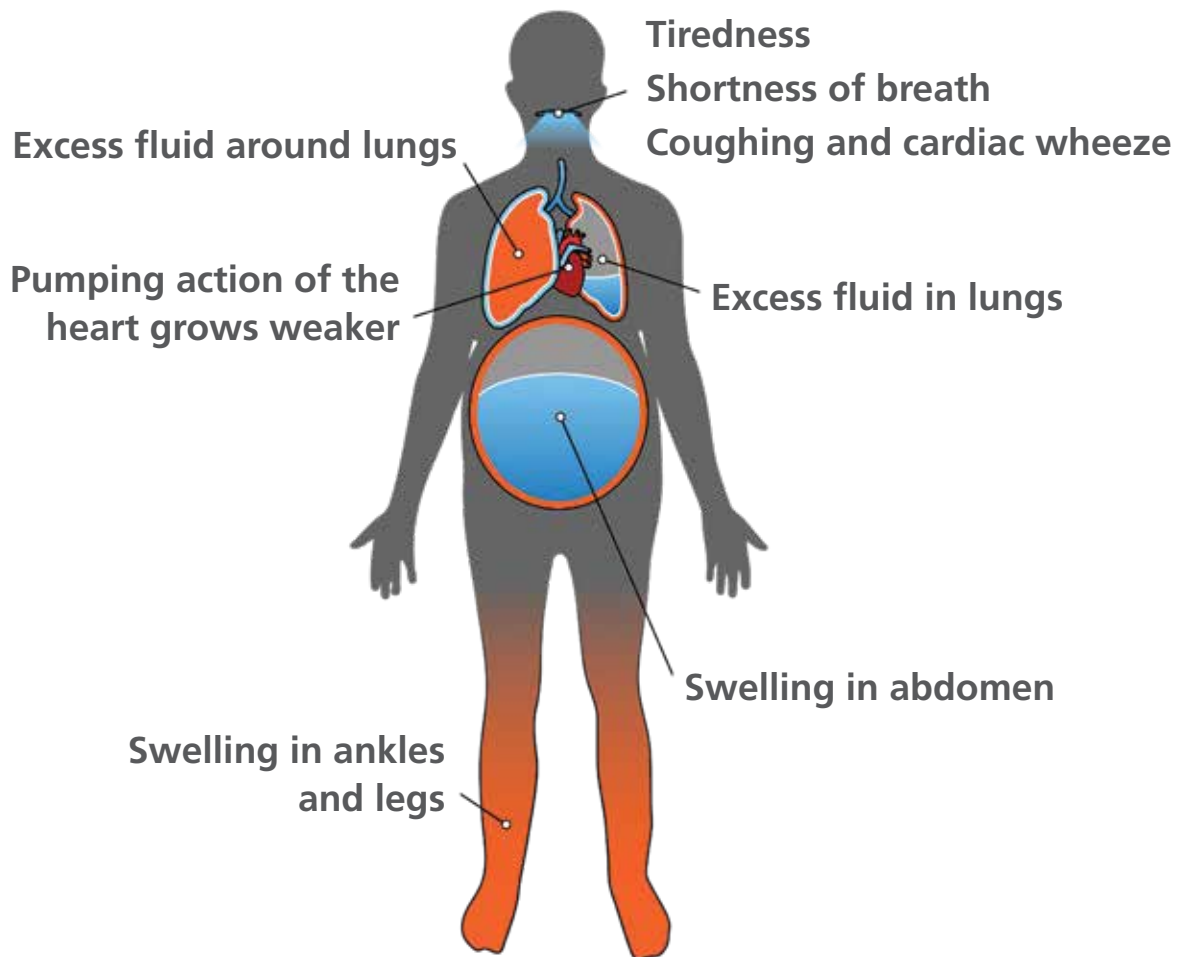
## WHAT IS “CARDIAC REHAB”?

**Cardiac rehabilitation** (rehab) is a program for anyone who has had a heart attack, heart failure, or other heart problem needing surgery or medical care. It includes exercise, health education, and counseling. Cardiac rehab can help you get stronger and build heart-healthy habits.

## HEART FAILURE

With **heart failure**, also called congestive heart failure, the heart muscle is weakened and does not pump as strongly as it should. The blood flow slows, and fluid can build up in your lungs or other parts of your body. Your heart is still pumping, but your body doesn't get all the blood and oxygen it needs.

### HEART FAILURE SYMPTOMS

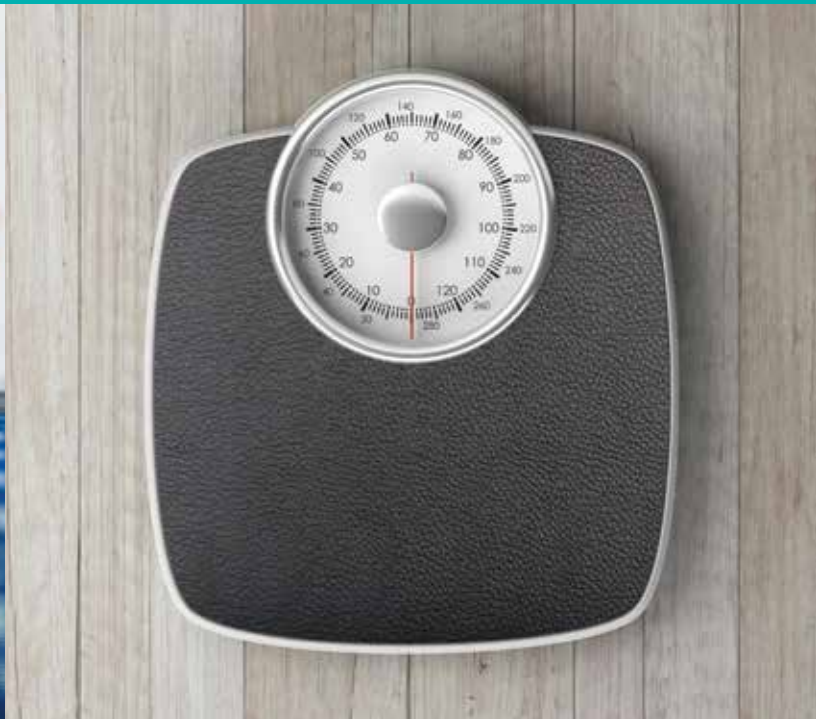


## YOUR CARE

- Ask your doctor about a cardiac rehab program.
- Discuss with your doctor what to track and any changes in symptoms.
- Exercise each day, but rest as needed.
- Get the flu vaccine each year. Talk to your doctor about the pneumonia vaccine.
- Limit alcohol.
- Limit salt or sodium in foods and drinks.
- Limit your daily liquids as advised by your doctor.
- Quit smoking, if you smoke.
- Take your medicines as prescribed by your doctor.
- Treatment may also include heart transplant and other surgeries.
- Weigh yourself daily to check for weight gain caused by increased fluid. Keep a weight record.





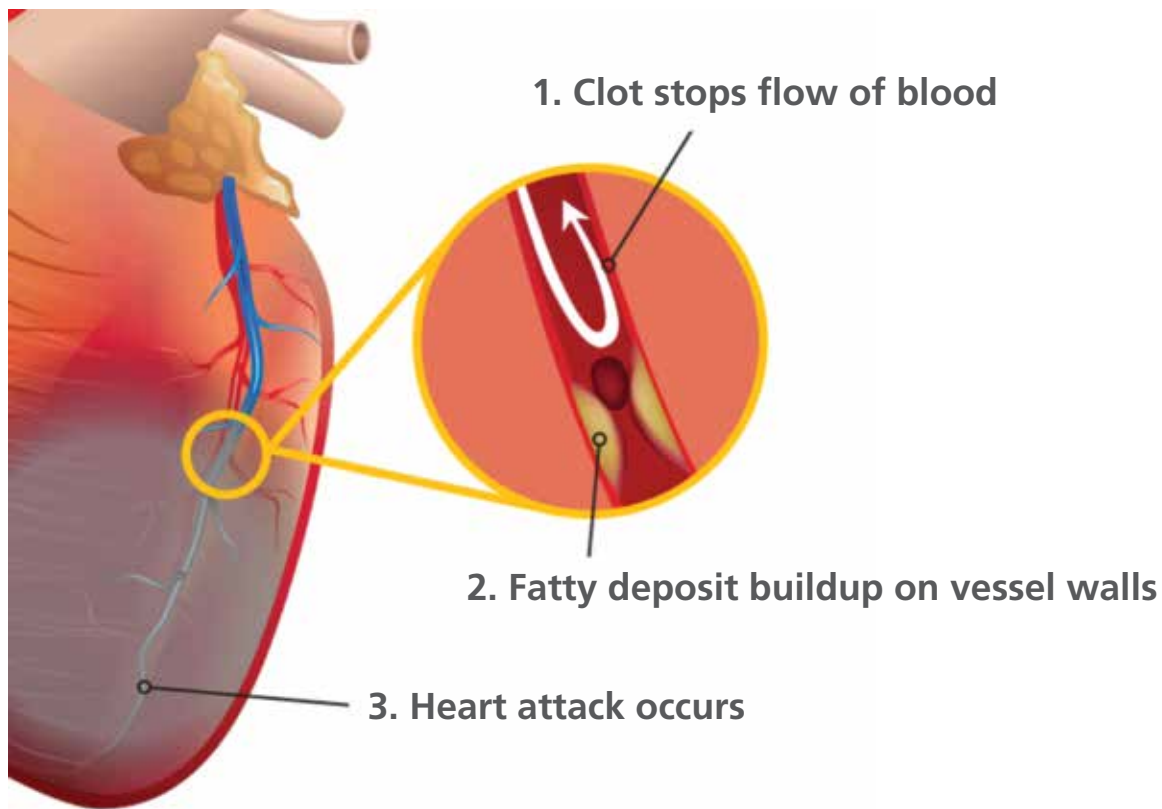


## TELL YOUR DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY IF YOU:

- Are coughing or wheezing.
- Feel confused, dizzy, or light-headed.
- Find it hard to breathe.
- Gain more than 2 to 3 pounds in a day.
- Gain more than 5 pounds in a week.
- Have changes in your eating habits or appetite.
- Have trouble sleeping or lying down.
- See swelling in your feet, ankles, or other parts of your body.

## HEART ATTACK

A **heart attack** occurs when a blood vessel that provides the heart muscle with oxygen becomes blocked, stopping blood flow to a part of the heart. It is also called a myocardial infarction or MI. If treatment is not done right away, part of the heart muscle dies. The sooner you get help, the less damage you will have to your heart.

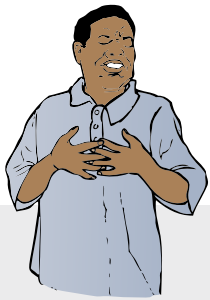


## HEART ATTACK WARNING SIGNS

Call **9-1-1** for help if you or someone else has warning signs of a heart attack.

Do not delay by driving to the hospital. Every minute matters!

**Common warning signs of a heart attack include:**



**Pressure in your chest**



**Discomfort in one or both arms, the back or stomach**



**Discomfort in your neck or jaw**



**Feeling like you can't breathe**



**Light-headed or like you're breaking out in a cold sweat**



**Sick to your stomach**

**The most common sign** is chest pain that lasts for more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back. But some people – especially if older, female, or diabetic – may have no chest pain at all with a heart attack.

The signs can vary from person to person. Signs can be mild and start slowly, or be more intense and sudden. If you have had a heart attack before, your signs may not be the same with a second heart attack.

**Call 9-1-1 right away** if you or someone else has any signs of a heart attack.



## AT THE HOSPITAL

Tests will be done to see if you had a heart attack and if there was damage to your heart. You may be in the hospital for a few days. You may be started on medicines and have treatments to improve the blood flow to your heart.

## YOUR CARE AFTER A HEART ATTACK

If you've had a heart attack, your heart may be damaged. You might be more likely to get a future heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, or other problems.

You can lower your chances with these steps:

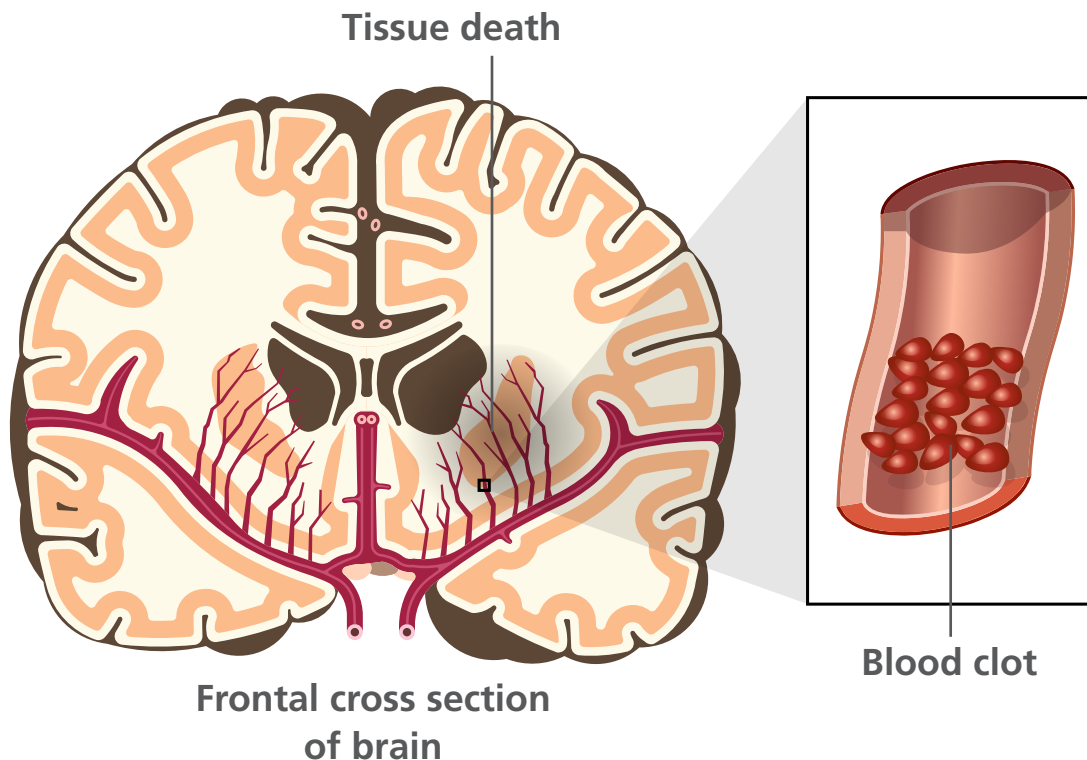
1. Go to your follow-up doctor's appointment.
2. Ask about getting into a cardiac rehab program.
3. Limit your activity for 4 to 6 weeks.
4. Follow the diet your doctor and dietitian suggest.
5. Weigh yourself each day to check for fluid buildup. Extra fluid makes your heart work harder. Call your doctor if you gain 2 to 3 pounds overnight.
6. Avoid temperatures that are very hot or very cold.
7. Call your doctor if you notice that changes in emotions after your heart attack worsen or do not go away in a few weeks.
8. Maintain healthy lifestyle habits around eating, exercise, and stress.

Your doctor may give you other instructions.

# STROKE

A **stroke** occurs when a blood vessel that feeds the brain gets blocked or bursts. Then that part of the brain can't work and neither can the part of the body it controls. It is important to get treatment right away.

If you have signs of a stroke, but the signs go away in minutes to hours, this is called a **transient ischemic attack, TIA**, or “mini stroke.” This is a strong warning that there is a problem and a stroke could occur in the future.



## STROKE WARNING SIGNS

Call **9-1-1** for help if you or someone else has warning signs of a stroke.

Do not delay by driving to the hospital. Every minute matters!



## Act **F.A.S.T.**



**FACE**  
droops



**ARM**  
weakness



**SPEECH**  
difficulty



**TIME**  
is critical.

Signs may include:

- Sudden **confusion**, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden **numbness** or weakness of the face, arms, or legs, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden **severe headache** with no known cause.
- Sudden **trouble seeing** out of one or both eyes.
- Sudden **trouble walking**, loss of balance, or lack of coordination.

Signs are often sudden but can take longer to show. The types of signs, how long they last, and how severe they are can all vary from person to person.

Call **9-1-1** right away if you or someone else has any signs of a stroke.

## AT THE HOSPITAL

Tests can be done to find the type, location, and cause of the stroke. The type of treatment you get will depend on the type of stroke.

## YOUR CARE AFTER A STROKE

Sometimes it takes a few days to see what type of damage has occurred. It is hard to predict how you might recover from a stroke. Care is planned based on your needs and type of stroke.

It may include:

- Adapting your activity to use the strong side of your body.
- Exercise to strengthen your muscles.
- Learning how to talk and communicate.
- Learning ways to eat and drink safely.
- Therapy for rehabilitation.

## TO PREVENT STROKE

- Avoid falls and injuries.
- Practice a healthy diet.
- Exercise often.
- Limit alcohol.
- Quit smoking, if you smoke.
- Treat high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and heart disease, if present.



CARING FOR  
YOUR HEART

*journal*

*Please use this section to take notes about  
your progress and any questions that  
you want to ask your doctor.*



# NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**NOTES**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# NOTES

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



**Do you need more support?** Please call Alliance Health Programs

Monday – Friday, 8 am – 5 pm

Phone Number: **1.510.747.4577** • Toll-Free: **1.855.891.9169**

People with hearing and speaking impairments (CRS/TTY): **711/1.800.735.2929**

**[www.alamedaalliance.org](http://www.alamedaalliance.org)**