

Heart Health

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The heart beats about 2.5 billion times over the average lifetime, pushing millions of gallons of blood to every part of the body. This steady flow carries with it oxygen, fuel, hormones, other compounds, and a host of essential cells. It also whisks away the waste products of metabolism. When the heart stops, essential functions fail, some almost instantly.

Given the heart's never-ending workload, it's a wonder it performs so well, for so long, for so many people. But it can also fail, brought down by a poor diet and lack of exercise, smoking, infection, unlucky genes, and more.

A key problem is atherosclerosis. This is the accumulation of pockets of cholesterol-rich gunk inside the arteries. These pockets, called plaque, can limit blood flow through arteries that nourish the heart — the coronary arteries — and other arteries throughout the body. When plaque breaks apart, it can cause a heart attack or stroke.

Although many people develop some form of cardiovascular disease (a catch-all term for all of the diseases affecting the heart and blood vessels) as they get older, it isn't inevitable. A healthy lifestyle, especially when started at a young age, goes a long way to preventing cardiovascular disease. Lifestyle changes and medications can nip heart-harming trends, like high blood pressure or high cholesterol, in the bud before they cause damage. And a variety of medications, operations, and devices can help support the heart if damage occurs.

Did you know

552,000 people
in North Carolina

have coronary heart
disease?

Small lifestyle changes can lead to a healthier heart.
Learn more about heart disease and risk factors at hearttruth.gov

www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Source: CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Survey Data, 2016.

National Heart Lung and Blood Institute

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- Know your numbers.
- Don't ignore the "Signs of a Cardiac Arrest." The most common warning signs are: **chest pain, breathlessness, lightheadedness, fainting, nausea, and vomiting.**
- Educate yourself.
- Seek new ways of eating and preparing your food(s).
- Exercise.
- Don't smoke.
- See your provider.

References:
www.health.harvard.edu/
www.cdc.gov
www.NIH.gov
www.goredforwomen.org