



Living with Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a disease of the heart (cardio) and blood vessels (vascular). The secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease is treating people who have had a heart attack or stroke to prevent another event.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO STAY HEALTHY?

- If you smoke, quit. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW, or visit smokefree.gov for information and support.
- Make exercise part of your everyday lifestyle.
- Eat a low-fat, high-fiber diet.
- Take your medications as prescribed and report any side effects to your doctor.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK MY DOCTOR?

- **What is my blood pressure?**
 - Goal is less than 140/90¹
- **What is my cholesterol?**
 - A lipid panel should be done at least yearly; more often if you are taking medication
 - Goal is a LDL cholesterol less than 100
- **Am I at a healthy weight?**
 - Recommendations are a body mass index (BMI) of 18.5–24.9
- **How much physical activity is good for me?**
 - Recommendations are 30–60 minutes of moderate intensity exercise on most days of the week

IF YOU HAVE DIABETES ASK:

Is my blood sugar under control?

- Have your A1C tested at least twice per year
- Test your blood sugar every day

Medications may be needed to help prevent or control coronary heart disease (CHD) and reduce the risk of a repeat heart attack.

DRUGS USED TO TREAT CHD	WHAT DOES THIS DRUG DO?
Aspirin (ASA)/Antiplatelets	When prescribed by your doctor, Aspirin/antiplatelets, can help lower the risk of heart attack or stroke by decreasing the inflammation of plaque in your blood vessels. It also works in your vessels to prevent the blood from clotting. Aspirin can reduce the risk of death in those people with a history of heart disease and/or stroke.
Anticoagulants	Anticoagulants are used in people that are high risk for stroke. They can reduce the risk of blood clots forming and keep existing clots from getting bigger. Clots can block blood flow and cause a heart attack or stroke.
ACE Inhibitor/ARB (angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor/ angiotensin receptor blocker)	ACE inhibitors and ARBs relax or widen the blood vessels which improves blood flow to the heart and lowers blood pressure.
Beta Blocker	Beta Blockers slow the heart and makes it beat with less contracting force so blood pressure drops and the heart does not work as hard. They also help the vessels to relax and improve blood flow. They are used for high blood pressure, can help prevent a repeat heart attack and are commonly used in people with heart failure.
Calcium Channel Blocker	Calcium Channel Blockers relax blood vessels and can lower the heart rate. They are used for treating high blood pressure and chest pain.
Diuretic (“water pills”)	Diuretics decrease fluid in the body and are used for high blood pressure and heart failure.
Blood Cholesterol-Lowering Agents	Cholesterol lowering agents are used to decrease total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol levels in the blood. Commonly prescribed agents include statins, fibrates and nicotinic acid.
Nitrates (including nitroglycerin)	Nitrates relax blood vessels and stop chest pain.

1. Heart.org