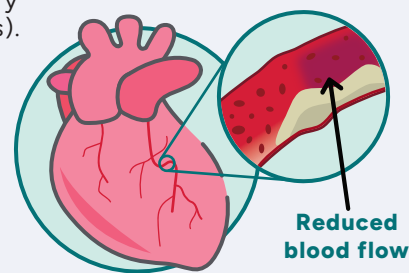


What is coronary heart disease?

Coronary heart disease, also known as coronary artery disease or ischemic heart disease, happens when **blood vessels** that carry **oxygen** to the **heart** (coronary arteries) become blocked due to a build-up of **fatty deposits** (atherosclerosis). As the fatty deposits grow, the blood vessels gradually become **narrower**, reducing the amount of blood and oxygen that flows to the heart muscle.

Your risk of developing coronary heart disease is **higher** if you:¹

- are overweight
- are not active or do not exercise regularly
- have diabetes
- have high blood cholesterol
- have high blood pressure (hypertension)
- smoke



Types of coronary heart disease

There are two types of coronary heart disease - **chronic** and **acute**. They have different symptoms and are managed differently:¹

Chronic coronary heart disease² (Chronic coronary syndrome)

- It is usually caused by a long-term (**chronic**) build-up of **fatty deposits** in the blood vessels that carry **oxygen** to the **heart**, causing reduced blood flow to the heart muscle.
- Many people with chronic coronary syndrome have **few to no symptoms** when at rest. Symptoms, if present, usually occur with **exercise**, strong emotions or **stress** and may include chest pain, shortness of breath, or extreme tiredness.
- Managing this condition usually involves a mix of lifestyle changes, long-term medications, and in some cases, medical procedures.



- If left untreated, it can **worsen** to acute coronary heart disease.
- Medicines help to stop the condition from worsening and relieve symptoms. Most of them can be taken at **home**.

Acute coronary heart disease (Acute coronary syndrome)

- It is caused by a sudden (**acute**) blockage of the blood vessels, usually because of a blood clot. These clots form when fatty deposits inside the blood vessels break apart.
- Symptoms tend to be **sudden**, can be **different** from person to person and may **vary** from mild to serious. They include **severe breathlessness, chest pain** or **discomfort in the arm, jaw or back**. These symptoms often last for more than **15 minutes** and may present with a **cold sweat** or **nausea** as well.³
- Call **995** immediately if someone has these symptoms as they could be having a **heart attack**.
- Acute coronary syndrome is a **medical emergency**. Timely medicines and medical procedures administered in the hospital are needed to **quickly** clear the blockage and **restore** blood flow to the heart.



What else can I do to help manage coronary heart disease?

You can reduce the risk of your condition worsening by:

- Eating a **healthy** and **balanced** diet
- Staying **physically active**
- **Quitting smoking** (if you smoke)
- Asking your doctor about how you can improve your heart health, such as ways to better manage your blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Taking your medicines as **prescribed** by your doctor. Medicines for heart conditions should not be stopped suddenly without your doctor's advice.



Connecting with other people with heart conditions may also give you support and help you cope better. You can reach out to **local patient support groups** if you want to share your experiences with other people with heart conditions.^{4,5}

Sources

1. www.singhealth.com.sg/patient-care/conditions-treatments/coronary-artery-disease
2. ACE Clinical Guidance on *Management of chronic coronary syndrome*, 26 March 2025
3. www.singhealth.com.sg/patient-care/conditions-treatments/heart-attack
4. Caring Hearts Support Group (CHSG) of National University Heart Centre, Singapore (NUHCS)
5. Singapore Heart Foundation