

# HEART DISEASE

What causes it?

## A Note About Blood Clots

Blood clots are really scary.

A blood clot that gets big enough to block an artery can cut off or severely limit the flow of blood and cause a heart attack. This can also happen with a blood clot that breaks free and flows into a plaque-narrowed artery. That can cause a blockage that prompts a heart attack as well.

A blood clot that blocks blood flow to the brain can cause a stroke. This type of stroke is called thrombotic stroke. A blood clot can also cause a stroke by traveling up to the brain itself. This is called an embolic stroke.

Both embolic and thrombotic strokes are types of ischemic strokes, which happen when arteries are blocked.

## Coronary Artery Disease:

Coronary artery disease (also known as coronary heart disease, CAD, or CHD) is the most common type of heart disease. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, CAD is the primary cause of death for both men and women in the United States.

It all starts with damage to the arteries. This damage can be caused by high blood pressure, inflammation, smoking, or high levels of cholesterol, certain fats, and/or sugars in the blood. Plaque begins to build up at the site of this damage. This buildup can narrow the arteries, constricting blood flow and causing chest pain.

If plaque breaks open, on the other hand, blood cells flock to it. These cells can build up into dangerous blood clots that could in turn cause heart attacks or stroke.

