



**STATE SAFETY OFFICE**  
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# SAFETY MESSAGE 18-04

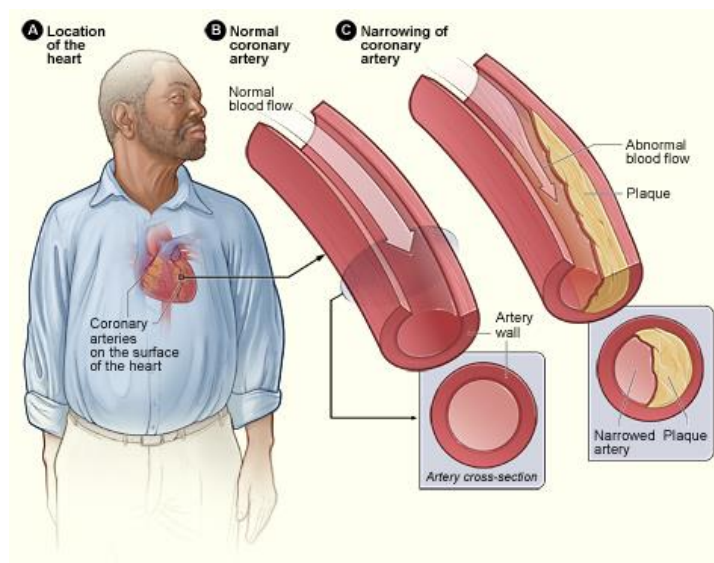
## American Heart Month



### February is American Heart Month

February falls just about in the middle of the winter months. The holidays are over and the weather is usually not favorable for outdoor activities like running or cycling. Our fitness routines change during the winter months. Our eating habits may have changed during these months. The American Heart Association would like to make everyone aware that heart health remains important no matter what time of year it is.

Heart attacks and strokes are the first things that come to mind when we think of health issues involving our cardio-vascular system. According to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute - heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. Fortunately, it is largely preventable and there are many things people can do to reduce their risk, such as being more active. You should strive for at least 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) each week of physical activity that gets your heart pumping and leaves you a little breathless. There are flexible ways to break it into amounts of daily activity, and even small amounts add up and can have lasting heart health benefits.



**Coronary heart disease (CHD)** is a disease in which a waxy substance called plaque builds up inside the coronary arteries. These arteries supply oxygen-rich blood to your heart muscle. This occurs over years and can eventually cause atherosclerosis. The plaque build-up can cause arteries to harden or could eventually cause a blood-clot.

### Major Risk Factors:

- **Unhealthy blood cholesterol levels.** This includes high LDL cholesterol (sometimes called “bad” cholesterol) and low HDL cholesterol (sometimes called “good” cholesterol).
- **High blood pressure.** Blood pressure is considered high if it stays at or above 140/90 mmHg over time. If you have diabetes or chronic kidney disease, high blood pressure is defined as 130/80 mmHg or higher. (The mmHg is millimeters of mercury—the units used to measure blood pressure.)
- **Smoking.** Smoking can damage and tighten blood vessels, lead to unhealthy cholesterol levels, and raise blood pressure. Smoking also can limit how much oxygen reaches the body's tissues.
- **Diabetes.** With this disease, the body's blood sugar level is too high because the body doesn't make enough insulin or doesn't use its insulin properly.
- **Overweight or obesity.** The terms “overweight” and “obesity” refer to body weight that's greater than what is considered healthy for a certain height.
- **Lack of physical activity.** Being physically inactive can worsen other risk factors for CHD, such as unhealthy blood cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, diabetes, and overweight or obesity.
- **Unhealthy diet.** An unhealthy diet can raise your risk for CHD. Foods that are high in saturated and *trans* fats, cholesterol, sodium, and sugar can worsen other risk factors for CHD.
- **Older age.** Genetic or lifestyle factors cause plaque to build up in your arteries as you age. In men, the risk for coronary heart disease increases starting at age 45. In women, the risk for coronary heart disease increases starting at age 55.
- **A family history of early coronary heart disease** is a risk factor for developing coronary heart disease, specifically if a father or brother is diagnosed before age 55, or a mother or sister is diagnosed before age 65.

### Screening and Prevention:

You can prevent and control coronary heart disease (CHD) by taking action to control your risk factors with [heart-healthy lifestyle changes](#) and [medicines](#). Examples of risk factors you can control include [high blood cholesterol](#), [high blood pressure](#), and [overweight and obesity](#). Only a few risk factors—such as age, gender, and family history—can't be controlled.

To reduce your risk of CHD and heart attack, try to control each risk factor you have by adopting the following heart-healthy lifestyles:

- Heart-healthy eating
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Managing stress
- Physical activity
- Quitting smoking

Know your family history of health problems related to CHD. If you or someone in your family has CHD, be sure to tell your doctor. If lifestyle changes aren't enough, you also may need medicines to control your CHD risk factors.

For more information on Heart Health visit:

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/coronary-heart-disease>

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/education-and-awareness/heart-month>

<http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/>

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