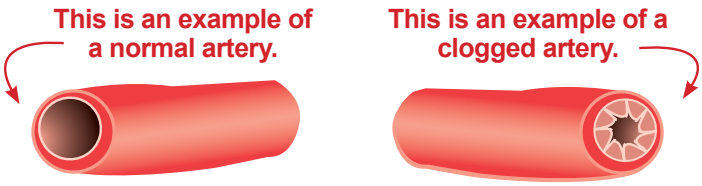
Understanding Heart Disease

What Is Heart Disease?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for Vietnamese. It develops over many years. It happens when the blood vessels going to the heart become narrow and clogged. Blood vessels are long, hollow tubes of tissue, much like drinking straws. There are many kinds of blood vessels. The main ones are called arteries.

When arteries become clogged, it increases the risk of developing heart disease. When the heart stops, life stops. So, When you take care of your heart, you take care of your life.



Are You At Risk for Heart Disease?

Risk factors are traits or habits that make a person more likely to develop heart disease. If you are at risk, the good news is that you can control most risk factors by making small lifestyle changes. Below is a list of risk factors that you can and cannot control.

The more risk factors you have, the higher your risk for developing heart disease. Check the risk factors you have and talk to your health care provider about what you can do to prevent heart disease.

Risk Factors You Can Control

- ❒ Overweight/Obesity
- ❒ High blood pressure
- ❒ High blood cholesterol
- ❒ Diabetes
- ❒ Not being physically active
- ❒ Smoking

Risk Factors You Cannot Control

- ❒ Your age
  - » 45 years or older and male
  - » 55 years or older and female
- ❒ Your family health history
  - » Your father or brother developed heart disease before age 55
  - » Your mother or sister developed heart disease before age 65

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Check the Steps You Will Take For a Healthy Heart

- ❒ Aim for a healthy weight.
- ❒ Make healthy food choices - Eat more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Choose foods low in sodium, saturated fat, and *trans* fat.
- ❒ Be physically active - Get 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate physical activity and do at least 2 days of strengthening activities each week.
- ❒ Quit smoking.
- ❒ Have regular checkups - Get your blood pressure checked regularly. If prescribed, take your blood pressure or cholesterol medicine as your doctor tells you.

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