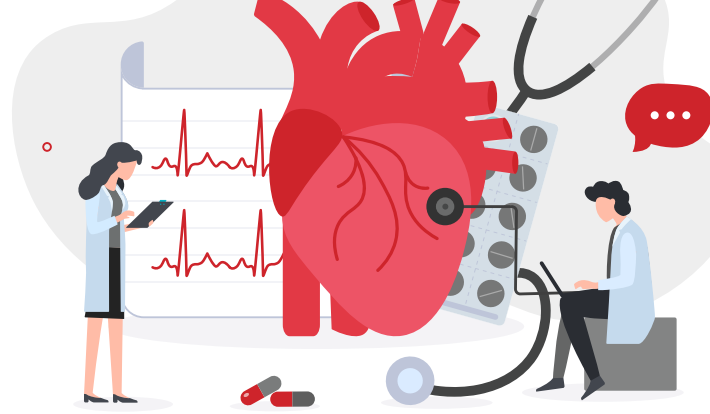




# What does ASCVD mean?



ASCVD, or Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease, is caused by the buildup of plaque within the arteries, limiting the flow of blood to important organs.

Currently, ASCVD-related conditions remain the leading cause of death.<sup>1</sup> These conditions include:



**Coronary heart disease (CHD):** Also known as coronary artery disease, is a condition in which **plaque builds up in the heart's arteries**, reducing blood flow to the heart and causing chest pain or a heart attack.



**Cerebrovascular disease:** A condition in which **a clot can form and limit blood flow to the brain**. If this blockage is temporary and does not cause permanent damage to the brain, it is called a transient ischemic stroke or TIA. If the blockage lasts long enough to cause permanent damage to the brain, it is called a stroke.



**Peripheral artery disease (PAD):** A condition when **plaque builds up, narrowing the arteries and reducing blood flow to the legs**. The most common symptom is painful cramping muscle in the hips, thighs or calves when walking or exercising. Many people with PAD have no symptoms or mistake their symptoms for something else.



**Aortic atherosclerotic disease:** A condition when **plaque builds up in the aorta, disrupting blood flow anywhere along its length** — from above the heart to below the belly button — this can result in sudden stabbing pain in the neck, jaw, abdomen, chest, or shoulder. Additional symptoms may include fainting, difficulty breathing, and sudden weakness. Any issues with the aorta can quickly become a medical emergency.



**Chronic Kidney disease (CKD):** A condition in which the **kidneys can't filter blood and make urine as they should**. Observational studies have shown that CKD increases the risk of ASCVD. Risk factors like diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol can lead to both kidney and heart problems.

## What are the symptoms of ASCVD?

Sometimes, people don't have symptoms until there's a big blockage in the arteries due to plaque buildup. The symptoms will vary based on the specific arteries and the level of blocked blood flow.

**Call 911 if you are experiencing any of the symptoms such as:**



Chest pain or discomfort (angina)



Shortness of breath



Dizziness or lightheadedness



Irregular heartbeats

**ASCVD increases the risk of heart attack, stroke or PAD in two ways:**

- 1 First, plaque narrowing an artery can lead to a blood clot, causing a blockage in the arteries for the heart, brain or legs
- 2 Second, plaque can break off and block an artery, reducing blood flow to the heart, brain or legs

## How can I reduce my risk of ASCVD?

Regular appointments with your doctor are important to understand your risk of heart disease and prevent ASCVD. During check-ups, your doctor will review your medical history, family history, and other risk factors like high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes that put you at higher risk of ASCVD.

**A healthy lifestyle is also key to reducing your risk of ASCVD. If prescribed medication, it's important to take it as directed. Consider the following:**

- ✓ Base your diet on heart-healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, fish, and poultry
- ✓ Limit sugary drinks and full-fat dairy products
- ✓ Include regular exercise, aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week
- ✓ Eliminate tobacco and limit alcohol
- ✓ Maintain a healthy weight

**Talk to your doctor about ASCVD and how to reduce your risk of heart disease. Learn more at [heart.org/cholesterol](https://www.heart.org/cholesterol)**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.acc.org/latest-in-cardiology/articles/2019/04/29/07/42/key-points-from-the-2019-acc-aha-guidelines-on-the-primary-prevention-of-cvd>