

COVID-19 & Your Heart

SARS-CoV-2 is a respiratory virus that causes the [COVID-19](#) disease. It is spread via small droplets from the nose and mouth, and from touching infected surfaces.

As of posting date, we know that at least 80 percent of people who are infected with the virus can have no symptoms, mild symptoms or moderate symptoms, including a fever and cough. The remaining 20 percent may develop more severe cases of coronavirus.



How Does COVID-19 Affect the Heart?

The COVID-19 infection causes a high level of inflammation that triggers an extra strong immune response. This response is more than what is needed for this virus and causes hyper inflammation and blood clots. The blood clots can lead to stroke and heart attacks even in young and healthy people.

COVID -19 contributes to irregular heartbeats, inflammation of the heart (and the lining of the heart), reduced blood flow to the heart, stroke, blood clotting and cardiac death. Some COVID-19 survivors, who were otherwise healthy, have developed blood vessel injuries, blood clots, arrhythmia, heart failure, myocarditis, strokes and heart attacks even without having severe disease or being hospitalized due to the coronavirus.

Who's at Risk?

Patients with heart disease, heart disease risk factors, diabetes and obesity are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 and related hospitalization and death.

How to Protect Your Health from COVID-19

1. Follow [COVID-19 prevention](#) recommendations, including hand washing, social distancing and refraining from touching your face.
2. Get a [flu vaccine](#). Heart disease also increases your risk of getting influenza, which is a [deadly virus](#).
3. Follow the treatment plan from your cardiologist r.
4. Don't put off [medical care](#) due to the pandemic. It is important to continue your regular care.
5. Don't wait to get medical care for [heart attack](#) or stroke symptoms. Call 9-1-1 and seek immediate medical attention at the first signs.
6. Stay active and eat a healthy diet to support a healthy heart and immune system.

Heart Symptoms to Watch for after COVID-19

If you experience these symptoms after you've had COVID-19, contact your doctor.

- Shortness of breath with exertion – increased or extreme
- Shortness of breath lying down
- Shortness of breath that wakes you

- Chest pain
- Swelling of the ankles
- Heart palpitations, irregular heartbeat, fast heart rates without activity
- Lightheadedness
- Dizziness

Watch the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) for up-to-date COVID-19 information.

Taking Care of Your Heart Every Day

Making small lifestyle changes can have a big impact on your heart health. Here are heart healthy tips from the National Jewish Health Cardiology Team.

1. Quit smoking

This is the single most important lifestyle change you can make to reduce your risk of heart attack, stroke and lung cancer. [We can help](#) you quit.

2. Watch salt intake

Limit [sodium](#) to 2000 mg a day (1500 mg if you have high blood pressure) to decrease blood pressure.

3. Exercise consistently

Brisk [walking about 20-30 minutes a day](#) improves heart health, immunity, mood, cognitive abilities and bone density.

4. Eat plants

Eating more [fruits and vegetables](#) can improve cholesterol, blood pressure and sodium levels. Having all the needed nutrients in your body supports health including immune system health.

5. Work on mindfulness

Using deep breathing, meditation, mindfulness, prayer and other ways to connect your mind and body, helps [reduce stress](#) and improve heart health.

6. Drink water

Avoid sugar sweetened and artificially sweetened beverages. The perfect beverage for human consumption is [water](#). Consume enough to keep your urine clear to light yellow, unless otherwise directed by a physician.

Visit our website for more information about support groups, clinical trials and lifestyle information.

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