

CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE

Coronary artery disease (CAD) is a condition in which plaque builds up inside the coronary arteries (heart vessels). These arteries supply the heart muscle with oxygen-rich blood. Plaque is made up of fat, cholesterol, calcium, and other substances found in the blood.

A normal artery has normal blood flow. But in an artery with plaque buildup, plaque narrows the arteries and reduces blood flow to the heart muscle. It also makes it more likely that blood clots will form in the arteries. Blood clots can partially or completely block blood flow.

When the coronary arteries are narrowed or blocked, oxygen-rich blood can't reach the heart muscle. This can cause **angina** or a heart attack. Over time, CAD can weaken the heart muscle and lead to **heart failure** and **arrhythmias**.

CAD is the most common type of heart disease. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women.

Definitions

- **Angina**—Discomfort, heaviness, pressure, aching, burning, fullness, squeezing, or painful feeling due to coronary artery disease. Often, it can be mistaken for indigestion.
- **Heart failure**—A condition in which the heart can't pump enough blood throughout the body.
- **Arrhythmias**—Problems with the speed or rhythm of the heartbeat.

