



Changemakers: Heart Health

Your heart works hard every day. Taking care of it is one of the most important things you can do for your long term health. While heart disease can feel complicated or overwhelming, learning the basics and knowing when to seek help can help you feel more empowered.

Experts at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center are here to help you understand your heart health and take steps toward a healthier future.



What is cardiovascular disease?

Cardiovascular disease is a broad term used to describe conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels. This includes problems with the heart itself, the valves, or the arteries and veins that carry blood throughout the body. You may also hear it called heart disease, coronary heart disease, or vascular disease.

Understanding your risk factors, recognizing early symptoms, and knowing your treatment options can help you stay ahead of heart disease.

Learn more by visiting the [Wexner Medical Center's Cardiovascular Disease webpage](#).

CHANGE/MAKERS



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER



Caring for your heart as you age

There's no single age when heart disease suddenly appears, but your risk does increase over time. In fact, heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States. The good news? Many risk factors are within your control.

Simple habits can go a long way:

- Talk with your doctor about your personal risk for cardiovascular disease
- Stay active—aim for 150 minutes of physical activity each week, as recommended by the American Heart Association
- Reframe your diet to choose healthier options
- Maintain a weight that's right for you
- Avoid smoking
- Drink alcohol in moderation

Even small lifestyle changes can add up to better heart health over time.

Explore tips and resources on [Ohio State's Health and Discovery website](#).

The role of genetics in heart health

Heart disease can run in families. If a close relative has been diagnosed, especially at a younger age, you may have a higher risk as well. Still, genetics are only part of the picture.

New tools can help clarify what your family history really means for you. For example, the [Family Health Risk Calculator](#) can give you and your doctor a clearer understanding of your personal risk.

In some cases, genetic testing may be helpful, particularly for people diagnosed at a young age or with a strong family history of heart disease. Working together, genetic counselors and cardiologists can review your family history, conduct targeted testing, and create a personalized plan for prevention or treatment.

Learn more at the [Cardiovascular Genetic and Genomic Medicine Program webpage](#).



Why women's heart health matters

Heart disease doesn't look the same in everyone. Women often experience different symptoms, risks and outcomes than men, and these differences matter.

Certain heart conditions are more common in women, including complications related to pregnancy and conditions like pulmonary hypertension. Warning signs of heart attacks can also be less obvious. Instead of sharp chest pain, women may experience fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea, heart palpitations or discomfort in the back or jaw. Because these symptoms are often mistaken for something else, women may delay seeking care, sometimes with serious consequences.

Despite medical advances, heart disease in women is still underdiagnosed and undertreated. The Women's Cardiovascular Health Clinic at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center is working to change that through specialized care, research and education.

Learn more at the [Women's Heart Health webpage](#).