

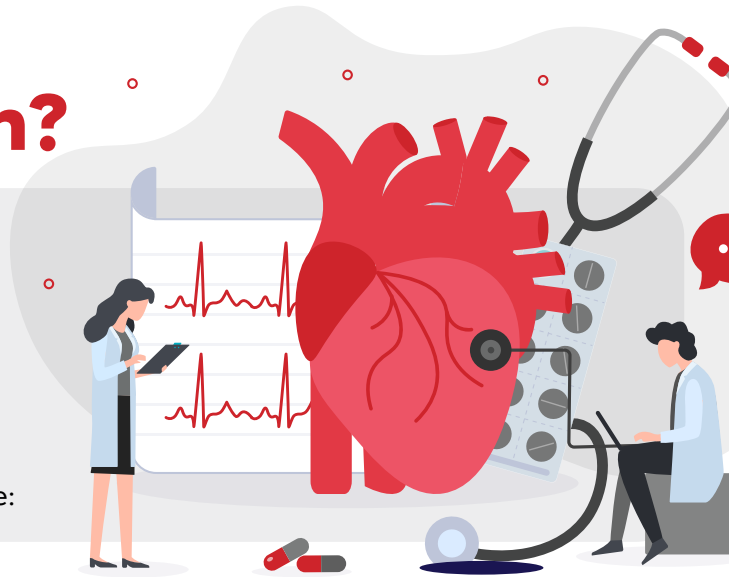


American Heart Association

# What does ASCVD mean?

**ASCVD is caused by plaque buildup in the arteries.** Plaque is made up of cholesterol and fatty substances that can narrow or block blood flow. Over time, this increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, and circulation problems in the legs and other parts of the body.

**Atherosclerosis** can affect almost any artery in the body, including those in the heart, brain, legs and kidneys. When it affects different areas, it has different names. These include:



**Coronary heart disease (CHD):** Plaque builds up in the heart's arteries, reducing blood flow. It may cause chest pain or a heart attack.



**Cerebrovascular disease:** A blood clot forms and limits blood flow to the brain, which can cause a stroke.



**Peripheral artery disease (PAD):** Plaque narrows the arteries in the arms or legs, reducing blood flow. The most common symptoms of lower-extremity PAD are cramping, fatigue, aching, pain or discomfort in the leg or hip muscles while walking or climbing stairs.



**Aortic atherosclerotic disease:** Plaque builds in the aorta, the body's largest artery that supplies nutrients and blood from the heart to the rest of the body.



**Renal artery disease:** Plaque builds in the arteries that supply blood to your kidneys, which may affect how well they function.

## What are the symptoms of ASCVD?

Some people don't notice symptoms until the arteries become more narrowed. Symptoms can vary depending on which arteries are affected and how much blood flow is reduced.

Your health care professional may order blood tests or imaging tests to look for plaque early and help prevent serious problems such as heart attacks or strokes.

### Call 911 if you are having symptoms such as:



Chest pain or discomfort (angina)



Shortness of breath



Dizziness or lightheadedness



Irregular heartbeats

## How does ASCVD increase my risk of a heart attack or stroke?

ASCVD can raise the risk of a heart attack and stroke in two main ways:

- 1 Plaque can break off and block an artery, reducing blood flow to the heart or brain.
- 2 Plaque can narrow an artery, leading to a blood clot that blocks blood flow to the heart or brain.

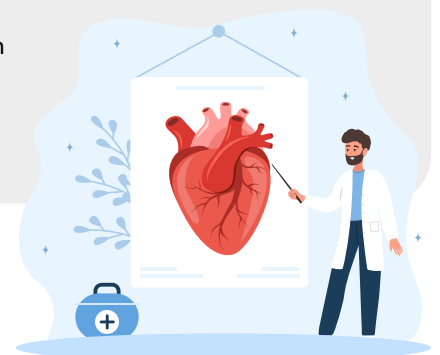
In both cases, reduced or blocked blood flow can result in a heart attack or stroke.

## How can I reduce my risk of ASCVD?

Regular appointments with your health care professional can help you understand your risk and make a plan that feels manageable. During check-ups, you may talk about:

- ✓ Your medical and family health history
- ✓ Cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar levels
- ✓ How lifestyle habits affect your risk
- ✓ Medications that may support your heart health

If you take medications, it's important to take them as directed.



Talk to your health care professional about ASCVD and ways to reduce your risk for future heart attack and stroke.