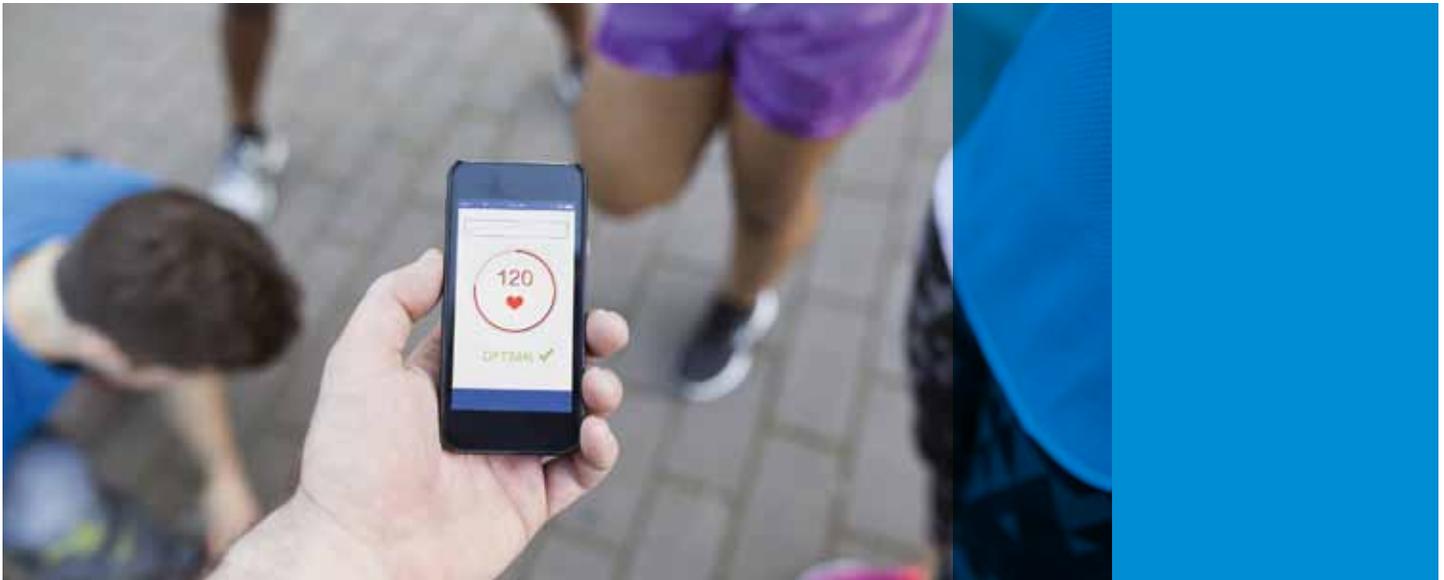


MetLife[®]

Know What's In Your Heart



Understanding the Basics of Heart Disease

How Does a Heart Get Sick?

Heart disease is a very broad term for many conditions that can affect your heart. Here, we're focusing on heart issues that can be prevented or controlled. When it's healthy, your heart is a marvel of strength and efficiency. It gives you stamina and helps you get through a tough day. To most people, the heart is also an emotional center—it beats faster with excitement and calms when you feel loved. The more you know about your heart, the better you can support it and the better it can support you.

Coronary Artery Disease

Let's focus on coronary artery disease. This form of heart disease happens only gradually, which is why it is possible for you to prevent or minimize its impact on your life. Coronary artery disease results from the accumulation of plaque on the inner walls of the arteries that bring blood to and from the heart. As more plaque is deposited, the arteries narrow and stiffen, restricting the flow of blood. Over time, this can lead to a heart attack because the heart can't get sufficient blood to keep working. A heart attack can cause permanent damage to the heart muscle.

Know Your Risks

Why do some people seem to get heart disease and others don't? No one knows for sure, but we do know that there are risk factors that can increase the likelihood that you'll develop heart disease.

Statistics may say that older people are more likely to die of heart disease. ¹ But the fact is that the steps you take to support your heart throughout your life can affect whether you have heart problems when you are older. But even if you're already over 65 and you have some bad habits, you can still make better choices now that will reduce your risks.

Try tackling one habit at a time. For example, if you smoke cigarettes and also eat an unhealthy diet, first work on reducing or even quitting smoking. Then, once you've become comfortable as a nonsmoker, begin to make improvements in your diet.



If you haven't made exercise a regular part of your day, start with short walks that don't feel too daunting. If you sit at your desk a lot, make sure you stand up every hour and walk around or stretch. You don't have to join a gym or run a marathon to make positive lifestyle changes.

The most important thing is to keep at it. Don't give up. Follow a realistic plan that will lessen your chances of developing heart disease. Enlist the support of family, friends, **and co-workers. They'd probably love to cheer you on in your efforts. And who knows?** You may even inspire them to join you. Remember that hearts are capable of tremendous gratitude—if you are good to your heart, it will reward you for a long time to come!

Sources:

¹World Health Organization, "Fact Sheet: Cardiovascular Diseases," September 2016

This information is intended to provide general guidance on health and wellness matters and is not medical advice. MetLife is not responsible for the accuracy of this information, which may not apply to your particular circumstances, so you rely on it at your own risk. You should always consult a licensed health care professional for the diagnosis and treatment of any medical condition and before starting or changing your health regimen, including seeking advice regarding what drugs, diet, exercise routines, physical activities or procedures are appropriate for your particular condition and circumstances.