The Silent Risks to Your Heart:
What You Should Know Before Symptoms Appear



Heart disease can develop quietly, with risk factors going unnoticed for years. Understanding the warning signs, monitoring key health indicators and making preventive care a priority can help protect cardiovascular health before complications arise.

Heart disease is often associated with sudden chest pain or breathlessness, but the risks can begin much earlier. Conditions such as high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol and diabetes may develop without obvious symptoms, gradually affecting cardiovascular health. By the time discomfort or complications appear, underlying problems may have been present for years.

This is why preventive heart care is essential. Understanding the risks before symptoms emerge can help individuals take timely action, seek medical advice and make informed decisions about their health.

The Hidden Threats Behind Heart Disease

High blood pressure is often called a silent risk because it may cause no noticeable symptoms while placing increased strain on the heart and blood vessels. Similarly, elevated LDL cholesterol can contribute to plaque build-up in arteries, narrowing them and restricting blood flow. Diabetes adds to the risk, as persistently high blood sugar can damage blood vessels and affect cardiovascular health.

Other contributing factors include smoking, excess body weight, physical inactivity, unhealthy eating habits and excessive alcohol consumption. Age and family history also influence an individual's risk, making personalised preventive care important.

Know Your Risk

One of the simplest ways to identify hidden risks is through regular health check-ups. Blood pressure measurements, cholesterol tests and blood glucose assessments can reveal conditions that may otherwise go unnoticed.

People with diabetes, a family history of early heart disease or previously elevated health markers should discuss appropriate screening intervals with a healthcare professional. Depending on individual circumstances, doctors may recommend additional investigations.

Preventive screening should not be confused with indiscriminate testing. The right assessments depend on age, symptoms, medical history and overall cardiovascular risk.

Small Changes, Meaningful Protection

Prevention begins with habits that support cardiovascular health. A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fibre, combined with regular physical activity, can help manage blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar.

Avoiding tobacco, maintaining a healthy weight, getting adequate sleep and managing stress are equally important. People diagnosed with hypertension, diabetes or high cholesterol should follow their prescribed treatment and avoid stopping medication without medical advice.

Ultimately, protecting the heart begins before the first warning sign appears. By understanding personal risk, attending regular check-ups and adopting healthier habits, individuals can take meaningful steps towards a healthier future.

Recognising the Warning Signs

Although some risk factors remain silent, symptoms should never be ignored. Chest discomfort, breathlessness, unusual fatigue, dizziness or discomfort spreading to the arms, back, neck or jaw may indicate a serious cardiac problem.

If a heart attack is suspected, seek emergency medical assistance immediately rather than waiting for symptoms to subside.

Ultimately, protecting the heart begins before the first warning sign appears. By understanding personal risk, attending regular check-ups and adopting healthier habits, individuals can take meaningful steps towards a healthier future.

World Heart Day reminds us that prevention is not a reaction to illness, but a commitment to lifelong well-being.



Young Hearts, Modern Lifestyles:
Why Heart Health Cannot Wait

Changing lifestyles, rising stress and sedentary routines are making cardiovascular awareness increasingly important among young adults. This World Heart Day, the focus is on recognising early risks and building healthier habits before problems arise.

Heart disease is often perceived as a condition that affects people later in life. However, younger adults also need to pay attention to their cardiovascular health. Long working hours, prolonged screen time, irregular meals and limited physical activity have become common features of modern living, often leaving little room for preventive healthcare.

While age remains an important risk factor, heart health is influenced by habits and medical conditions that can develop much earlier. Building awareness during young adulthood can help establish healthier routines for the years ahead.

The Lifestyle Connection

Modern lifestyles can quietly contribute to cardiovascular risks. A sedentary routine, frequent consumption of highly processed foods, inadequate sleep and chronic stress can influence weight, blood pressure and metabolic health.

Smoking and tobacco use further increase cardiovascular risk, while excessive alcohol consumption can also affect heart health. Family history, diabetes and elevated cholesterol are additional factors that young people should not overlook.

The challenge is that these risks may not produce noticeable symptoms in their early stages. Feeling energetic or physically fit does not necessarily mean that blood pressure, cholesterol or blood sugar levels are within a healthy range.

Prevention Begins with Small Changes

Protecting the heart does not require an extreme lifestyle transformation. Regular physical activity, balanced meals and adequate sleep can make a meaningful contribution to overall cardiovascular well-being.

Young adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week, alongside muscle-strengthening activities. Choosing fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fibre-rich foods, while limiting excess salt, sugar and unhealthy fats, can support a balanced diet.

Managing stress, avoiding tobacco and maintaining a healthy weight are equally important. Regular health check-ups can help identify risk factors early, particularly among individuals with a family history of heart disease or existing medical conditions.

7 Everyday Habits for a Healthier Heart

Eat smart, move more, live better.

A healthy heart begins with everyday choices. Follow these seven simple habits to support cardiovascular wellness:

1. **Eat balanced meals:** Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts.
2. **Stay active:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise weekly.
3. **Monitor health:** Check blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar regularly.
4. **Avoid tobacco:** Quit smoking and limit exposure to tobacco.
5. **Manage stress:** Practise relaxation and make time for yourself.
6. **Sleep well:** Maintain a consistent, restful sleep routine.
7. **Seek medical advice:** Never ignore unusual chest discomfort or breathlessness.



Mind Your Coronaries Before It Is Too Late

In an age overflowing with health information, understanding our most vital organ remains essential. Knowing how coronary disease develops and acting early can help protect the heart from serious complications, writes **Dr Debdatta Majumdar,** Senior Consultant, Interventional Cardiology, Rabindranath Tagore International Institute Of Cardiac Sciences, Kolkata.

The heart supplies blood to the entire body, but the heart itself is supplied by three coronary arteries - one on the right and two on the left. One of the most common conditions affecting these arteries is atherosclerosis, a progressive process that can begin in early adulthood.

Over the years, the build-up can gradually narrow the coronary arteries and, if left unaddressed, may eventually result in complete blockage. This can severely compromise blood flow to the heart.

Why Early Assessment Matters

A major concern with coronary blockage is the risk of a heart attack, which can have a high mortality rate and is described as the commonest cause of sudden cardiac death. The message, therefore, is not to wait until a cardiac emergency occurs before paying attention to coronary health.

Early assessment can help identify coronary disease and allow appropriate intervention where required. People should discuss their individual cardiovascular risk with a cardiologist and undergo coronary evaluation when advised.

Act Before the Crisis

Today, information about health is readily available through social media and artificial intelligence. Yet awareness needs to translate into action. Understanding the risks, consulting a specialist and addressing coronary disease at an appropriate stage can potentially help prevent a serious cardiac event.

The central message is simple: do not wait for your arteries to become critically blocked before taking heart health seriously. Paying attention early can make a meaningful difference.



Simplifying Cardiac Surgery with MICS

Supriyo Chakrabarty, Group Advisor, B.P. Poddar Hospital

Heart health is shaped largely by the choices we make every day - what we eat, how active we are, how well we manage stress, and whether we give our body the attention it deserves. Along with a healthy lifestyle and balanced diet, periodic health check-ups are extremely important because cardiovascular disease can often progress silently, without giving us an obvious warning.

People generally avoid preventive health checks for a few common reasons. For one section of the population, there is still limited awareness about cardiovascular health, common risk factors and the diseases they can lead to. Another section believes they are absolutely fine simply because they have no apparent health problems or symptoms. There is also a third group that avoids screening out of fear, what if something serious is detected? This apprehension is particularly common when people hear words such as bypass surgery or open-heart surgery. Unfortunately, much of this fear stems from incomplete or half-understood information. Statistical data indicate that around 28–40% of patients advised CABG may initially hesitate or refuse the procedure, often because they associate heart surgery with a large incision, significant pain and a prolonged recovery.

But cardiac care has changed dramatically. With modern diagnostics, advanced interventional cardiology and newer surgical techniques, many conditions can now be treated without surgery. And when surgery is necessary, Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery, or MICS, has transformed the patient experience.

Today, even complex coronary bypass procedures and selected valve surgeries can be performed without the conventional sternotomy associated with open-heart surgery. Instead of an 8–12 inch incision through the breastbone, MICS may be performed through a 2–4 inch incision, without cutting the sternum. This generally means less pain, reduced blood loss, a lower risk of wound-related complications and a much faster recovery. While complete recovery after conventional open-heart bypass may take three months, MICS patients can return to normal routine within just two weeks.

At B. P. Poddar Hospital, we routinely perform Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery. Be it a two-day-old neonate or a patient over 90 years of age, MICS is being successfully performed across age groups. On average, we conduct more than 100 MICS procedures every month, making it a well-established part of our cardiac surgical practice.