Cardiovascular disease: types and symptoms
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The burden of cardiovascular disease

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD), including heart disease and stroke, is the world’s largest killer, claiming 17.1 million lives a year¹
- In 2004, an estimated 7.2 million of these deaths were due to coronary heart disease and 5.7 million were due to stroke²
- Over 80 per cent of CVD deaths take place in low-and middle-income countries and occur almost equally in men and women¹
- By 2030, almost 23.6 million people will die from CVD, mainly from heart disease and stroke. It is projected to remain the single leading cause of death¹
- CVD is responsible for 10 per cent of disability adjusted life years (DALYs)³ lost in low- and middle-income countries, and for 18 per cent of DALYs lost in high-income countries²

Types of cardiovascular disease

- CVD is a group of disorders/diseases of the heart and blood vessels, including heart attack and stroke
- Types of CVD include:
  o Coronary heart disease—a disease of the blood vessels supplying the heart muscle that can lead to a heart attack
  o Stroke (cerebrovascular disease) – the brain equivalent to a heart attack. Blood must flow to and through the brain for it to function. If this flow to a part of the brain is blocked or interrupted, that part of the brain is deprived of oxygen and nutrients and begins to die
  o Rheumatic heart disease – caused by streptococcal bacteria (rheumatic fever) damages the heart muscle and heart valves
  o Deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism – blood clots in the leg veins, which can dislodge and move to the heart and lungs
  o Congenital heart disease – this is a heart defect present at birth. While congenital heart disease can be caused by genetic factors or by adverse exposures during pregnancy, the cause of most cases is unknown. Examples include holes in the heart (such as atrial septal defect or ventricular septal defect), abnormal valves, and abnormal heart chambers

Warning signs of heart attack or stroke

- A heart attack or stroke may be the first warning of an underlying disease
- Heart attack warning signs include:
  o Chest discomfort – most attacks have discomfort in the centre of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain
  o Pain or discomfort in other areas of the body – can include one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach
  o Shortness of breath – can occur with or without chest discomfort
  o Other signs – may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or light-headedness
- The warning signs of a stroke include:
  o Sudden weakness of the face, arm, or leg, most often on one side of the body
  o Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
  o Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
  o Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
  o Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

³ Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) lost can be thought of as “healthy years of life lost” (WHO definition)
References
