

WORLD HEART DAY

SEPTEMBER 29
2026





“USE HEART FOR ACTION”

The World Heart Federation’s 2024–2026 campaign, “Use Heart for Action,” encourages individuals, communities and governments to move beyond awareness and take meaningful action to protect cardiovascular health.

According to the World Health Organization, nearly 18 million people die from cardiovascular diseases each year, with heart attack and stroke accounting for about 85% of these deaths.

In 2021 alone, cardiovascular diseases claimed 20.5 million lives globally. The burden continues to grow, making prevention, early detection and timely treatment more important than ever.

INDIA'S HEART HEALTH REALITY

India accounts for approximately one-fifth of global cardiovascular disease-related deaths, with a significant proportion occurring among people below 70.

A 2025 systematic review covering studies from 2000 to 2024 found the pooled prevalence of cardiovascular disease among Indian adults to be 11%. The prevalence was higher in urban areas at 12%, compared with 6% in rural areas.

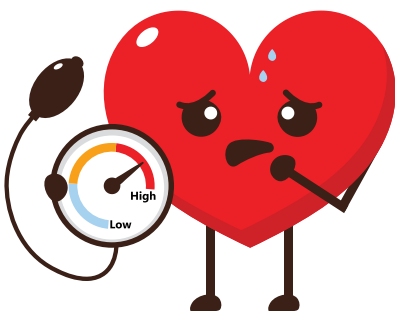
What makes India's cardiac burden different?

- **Earlier Onset:** Coronary artery disease tends to develop about a decade earlier in Indian patients compared with their Western counterparts.
- **Silent Presentation:** High blood pressure and early coronary disease may have few or no noticeable symptoms until a cardiac event occurs.
- **Delayed Diagnosis:** Symptoms may be overlooked or attributed to other causes, delaying cardiology consultation and treatment.



COMMON HEART DISEASES

- **Heart Attack (Myocardial Infarction):** A sudden blockage cuts blood flow to the heart. Symptoms may include severe chest pain, sweating, nausea and breathlessness. Immediate medical care is critical.
- **Coronary Artery Disease (CAD):** Plaque buildup narrows the heart's arteries, reducing oxygen supply and potentially causing angina or a heart attack. Lifestyle changes and cholesterol control can help slow progression.
- **Hypertension (High Blood Pressure):** Often silent, high BP damages arteries and strains the heart, increasing the risk of heart attack, stroke and heart failure. Regular monitoring and limiting salt are important.
- **Heart Failure & Arrhythmias:** Heart failure affects the heart's ability to pump effectively, causing fatigue, swelling and breathlessness. Arrhythmias cause abnormal heart rhythms and may lead to dizziness or fainting. Both require medical evaluation and appropriate treatment.
- **Cardiac Arrest:** The heart suddenly stops pumping effectively, causing loss of consciousness and normal breathing. Immediate CPR and defibrillation can be lifesaving.
- **Other Heart Diseases:** Heart valve disorders, congenital heart defects, pericardial diseases and cardiomyopathies also affect heart health and require appropriate diagnosis, treatment and ongoing care.



WARNING SIGNS OF A HEART ATTACK

Recognising cardiac symptoms early can make a critical difference.

- Chest pain, pressure, tightness or squeezing
- Pain spreading to the arm, jaw, neck or back
- Sudden breathlessness
- Cold sweating, nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Sudden feeling that something is seriously wrong

Seek emergency medical care immediately. Do not wait for symptoms to subside.

WARNING SIGNS OF HEART FAILURE

- Swelling of the feet, ankles or legs that worsens during the day
- Breathlessness when lying flat or during mild activity
- Waking up at night feeling unable to breathe
- Rapid weight gain due to fluid retention
- Persistent fatigue or weakness with minimal effort

WARNING SIGNS OF ARRHYTHMIA

- Palpitations: fluttering, racing or pounding sensations in the chest
- Episodes of dizziness or near-fainting
- Sudden weakness without exertion



ACIDITY OR HEART ATTACK?

Chest discomfort is sometimes mistaken for acidity or gas. While symptoms can overlap, certain warning signs should never be ignored.

Symptom	Acidity or Gas	Heart Attack
Location	Upper stomach, below the chest	Centre or left side of chest; may spread
Feeling	Burning, bloating or sour taste	Pressure, squeezing or tightness
Triggers	After eating, spicy food or lying down	May occur at rest, during exertion or stress
Sweating	Not typically	Cold sweating is a key warning sign
Breathlessness	Not typically	Common, especially with exertion
Arm or jaw pain	Not typical	May spread to the left arm or jaw
Antacid response	Usually improves	Does not improve
Duration	May come and go and ease with time	May persist or worsen

THE RULE THAT CAN SAVE LIVES

Chest discomfort accompanied by cold sweating, breathlessness or pain spreading to the arm or jaw should be treated as a possible cardiac emergency until proven otherwise.

Do not wait for an antacid to work. Seek emergency medical attention.

KNOW YOUR RISK FACTORS

Non-Modifiable Risk Factors

- **Age:** Cardiovascular risk increases significantly after 45 in men and after menopause in women.
- **Gender:** Men generally face a higher cardiac risk at an earlier age. Women's risk increases significantly after menopause.
- **Family History:** Having a first-degree relative with heart disease before 55 in men or 65 in women can substantially increase your risk.
- **Genetics:** Inherited factors can increase the tendency toward high cholesterol, high blood pressure and other cardiovascular conditions.

Modifiable Risk Factors

These are factors you can take action on:

- High blood pressure, one of the most important modifiable cardiac risk factors
- High LDL cholesterol and low HDL cholesterol
- Poorly controlled diabetes
- Smoking and tobacco use in any form
- Obesity, particularly excess abdominal fat
- Physical inactivity
- Chronic stress and inadequate sleep
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Exposure to air pollution



INDIA-SPECIFIC REALITY

Urban India has a higher reported CVD prevalence than rural India. Sedentary work, chronic stress, irregular meals, physical inactivity and high blood pressure can contribute significantly to cardiovascular risk among urban professionals.

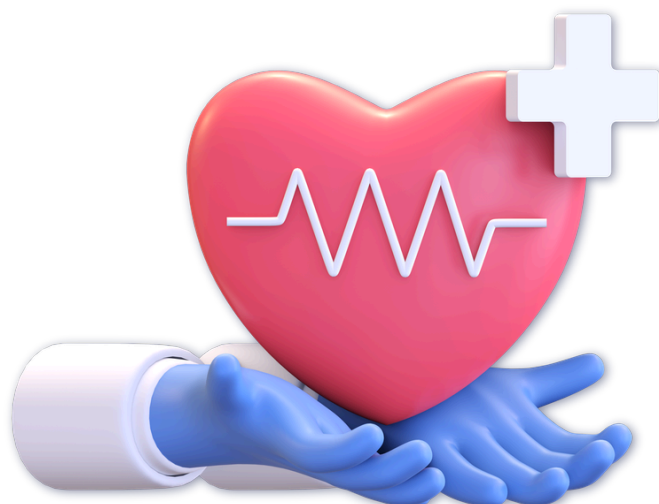
HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HEART

Heart disease prevention is not about making one major change. It is about building healthy habits and managing risk factors consistently over time.

- **Stay Active:** Aim for 150 minutes of moderate activity each week, such as a 30-minute brisk walk on five days.
- **Control Blood Pressure:** Monitor your BP regularly and follow healthy habits and prescribed treatment.
- **Manage Cholesterol:** Check your cholesterol as advised and take steps to keep LDL levels under control.
- **Avoid Tobacco:** Smoking and tobacco use increase cardiovascular risk. Quitting lowers your risk over time.
- **Manage Diabetes:** Keep blood sugar and HbA1c within the range recommended by your doctor.
- **Eat for Your Heart:** Choose more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes and fish, with less salt, processed and fried food.
- **Prioritise Sleep & Stress Management:** Aim for 7 to 8 hours of quality sleep and make time for regular relaxation.
- **Get Regular Health Checks:** Regular BP, cholesterol and other recommended health checks can help identify risks early.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

Supplements, detox drinks and “superfoods” are not substitutes for proven heart-health measures.



HEART-HEALTHY FOODS

A heart-healthy diet focuses on nutrient-rich foods that support healthy blood vessels, cholesterol and blood pressure.

5 Foods to Prioritise

- Extra virgin olive oil
- Berries
- Nuts and seeds
- Green leafy vegetables
- Fibre-rich foods



More Heart-Friendly Choices

- Omega-3 sources: Fatty fish, chia seeds and nuts
- Nitrate-rich vegetables: Beets, arugula, Swiss chard and leafy greens
- Cruciferous vegetables: Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and cabbage
- Magnesium-rich foods: Spinach, kale, avocado, seeds and legumes
- Fruits: Berries, watermelon, apples, citrus fruits, cherries and pomegranates
- Fermented foods: Yoghurt, kefir, kimchi and sauerkraut
- Other options: Garlic, turmeric, green tea and tomatoes

20 FOODS FOR A STRONG HEART

Asparagus • Avocados • Beets • Broccoli • Chia Seeds • Coffee • Cranberries • Green Tea • Dark Leafy Greens • Garlic • Olive Oil • Omega-3-rich Fish • Pomegranates • Nuts & Seeds • Berries • Citrus Fruits • Tomatoes • Turmeric • Watermelon • Whole Grains

Note: Supplements and specific extracts should not be used routinely for heart protection without discussing them with a healthcare professional.

WHEN SHOULD YOU SEE A CARDIOLOGIST?

Consider a cardiac evaluation if you:

- Have recurring chest pain, pressure or tightness
- Develop unexplained breathlessness during activity
- Frequently experience racing, fluttering or skipped heartbeats
- Have unexplained fainting or near-fainting
- Have repeatedly high blood pressure readings
- Have diabetes without a recent cardiac review
- Have a strong family history of early heart disease
- Are over 40 and have never had your heart risk assessed

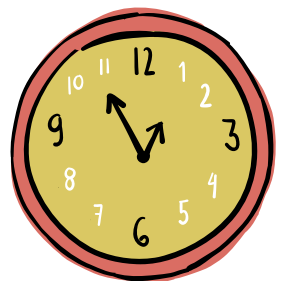
WHAT TO EXPECT?

Medical History → BP Check → ECG → Blood Tests → Echocardiogram, if required

These assessments help evaluate your heart health and identify potential risks early.

TIME IS MUSCLE

Every minute matters during a heart attack.



A blocked coronary artery reduces oxygen to the heart muscle. The longer the blockage continues, the greater the potential damage.

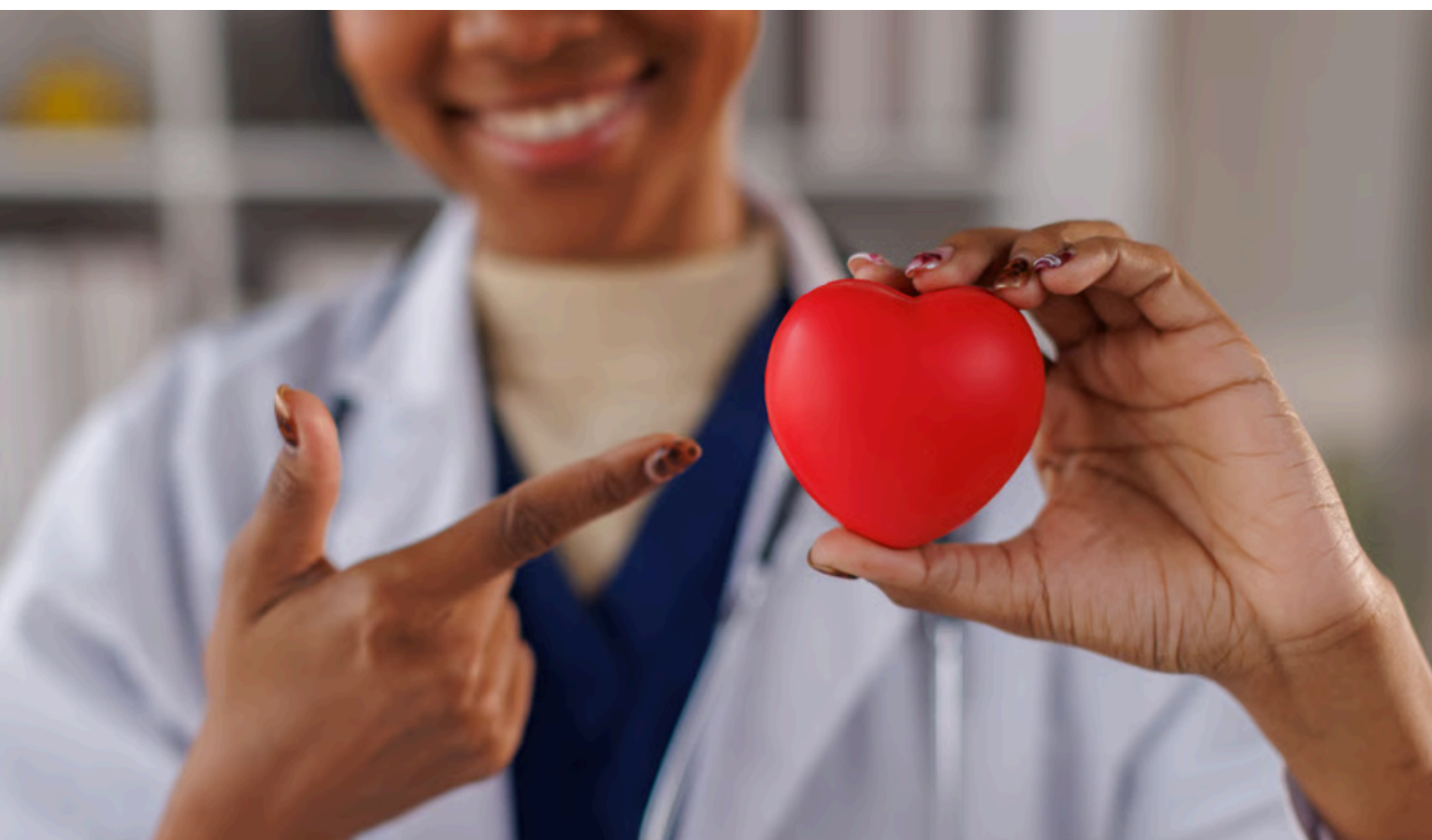
Recognise the signs. Act immediately. Seek emergency medical care. Rapid treatment can restore blood flow, limit heart damage and improve outcomes.

REMEMBER

DON'T WAIT. DON'T SELF-DIAGNOSE. DON'T DELAY.

Recognise the signs → Seek emergency care → Get treated quickly

This World Heart Day, take a moment to understand the signs and risk factors that could make a meaningful difference to your heart health. By recognising persistent chest discomfort, breathlessness, unusual fatigue, palpitations and other warning signs, you can seek timely medical attention and take action before a serious cardiac event occurs. Regular health checks, healthy lifestyle choices and early medical support can help manage risk, protect heart health and give you and your loved ones greater confidence in taking care of your heart.



EVERY HEARTBEAT MATTERS.

