

Causes of heart disease

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Abstract

Your heart is one of your body's most important organs. Essentially a pump, the heart is a muscle made up of four chambers separated by valves and divided into two halves. Each half contains one chamber called an atrium and one called a ventricle. The atria (plural for atrium) collect blood, and the ventricles contract to push blood out of the heart. The right half of the heart pumps oxygen-poor blood (blood that has a low amount of oxygen) to the lungs where blood cells can obtain more oxygen. Then, the newly oxygenated blood travels from the lungs into the left atrium and the left ventricle. The left ventricle pumps the newly oxygen-rich blood to the organs and tissues of the body. This oxygen provides your body with energy and is essential to keep your body healthy. The general term used to cover malfunctions of the heart is Heart Disease, or sometimes Cardiac Disease ("Cardiac" is a Latin term for the heart). Though there are multiple forms of heart disease, our discussion focuses on the two most common: Heart Attack and Heart Failure. This document is designed to teach you about heart attacks and heart failure: what causes these diseases, what forms these diseases take, and what can be done to treat these diseases when they occur. As both diseases are to some extent avoidable, we have also provided a discussion of preventative steps you can take to decrease your chances of having to deal with heart disease, or to minimize the negative effects of existing heart disease.



7th International Conference on Cardiology and Cardiovascular Medicine | July 14, 2020

Citation: Sudha Bansode, Causes of heart disease, Global Cardiology Congress 2020, 7th International Conference on Cardiology and Cardiovascular Medicine, July 14, 2020, pp- 12