

# YOUR HEALTH & WELL BEING



CIGNA HealthCare  
A Business of Caring.

## Heart Disease: What Is It?

**Coronary heart disease** is a result of a blockage in the blood vessels that supply blood to the heart. The heart muscle requires a constant supply of oxygen and nutrients in order to function properly. When the coronary arteries become partially blocked, chest pain (angina) sometimes occurs. If there is a complete blockage in any of these arteries, part of the heart muscle receives no oxygen and dies. This is called a myocardial infarction or heart attack.

### WHAT CAUSES HEART DISEASE?

Atherosclerosis (a gradual build-up of fat and cholesterol in the arteries) narrows the arteries and restricts the flow of blood. Further, scar tissue can form and debris can build up creating plaque. Blood clots can get trapped in the narrowing passage and block the blood flow, or over time the deposits themselves can completely block the passageway. When this happens in coronary arteries (those that feed the heart), it is called arteriosclerosis. This can cause angina or heart attacks. When a blockage due to atherosclerosis occurs in the blood vessels feeding the brain, a stroke can result.

### HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE HEART DISEASE?

Symptoms of heart disease usually don't show up until an artery is at least two-thirds blocked. If this happens in the major artery that leads to the vital organs in your abdomen, you may suffer abdominal pain as an organ is deprived of blood. When this happens to the



heart muscle, a dull-to-crushing pain may occur in the chest area (usually beneath the breastbone). This often happens right after physical activity, and usually goes away after a few minutes (sometimes up to 20 minutes) of rest.

Symptoms of a heart attack are much more serious and require immediate medical attention. See your doctor or call an ambulance immediately if you have any of the following symptoms:

- A heavy squeezing or crushing pain in the center of the chest that lasts for several minutes
- Pain that radiates to the shoulder, back, jaw, arm or neck
- Sweating, anxiety, nausea or vomiting
- Shortness of breath, dizziness or fainting

### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I'M HAVING ANGINA OR A HEART ATTACK?

In the case of severe chest pain or if you think you are having a heart attack:

- Take one aspirin immediately
- Call for emergency help (911)

### IN THE CASE OF ANGINA:

Call for emergency help if the pain gets worse, radiates down your arm or to the jaw or neck, or is accompanied by shortness of breath, rapid irregular pulse, sweating, nausea or vomiting. If your chest pain doesn't go away after a few minutes rest and after taking any medication prescribed for angina attacks (e.g., nitroglycerin).

Knowing the signs and symptoms of heart disease can truly be life saving for you or a loved one. Learn to recognize the symptoms and seek a doctor's help if you think you may have heart disease.

### Did You Know?

Are you a CIGNA HealthCare member diagnosed with heart disease? If so, now you have help through the CIGNA Well Aware for Better Health<sup>SM</sup> program for cardiac conditions. The Well Aware cardiac program is designed to help individuals recognize and manage their symptoms to avoid medical crises. To learn more about the Well Aware cardiac program go online to [www.cigna.com](http://www.cigna.com) or call CIGNA HealthCare Member Services at the toll-free number on your ID card.

*CIGNA Well Aware for Better Health<sup>SM</sup>*

# Listen to Your Heart

Whether the diagnosis is coronary artery disease or congestive heart failure, a heart condition can be a real challenge. That's why CIGNA has developed a program to help monitor and manage the condition, and help reduce the risk for related complications.



CIGNA Well Aware for Better Health<sup>SM</sup>, gives you personalized tools and support so you can work with your doctor to design a care plan that's focused on:

- Anticipating and managing early warning signals;
- Making dietary substitutions that reduce salt and cholesterol; and
- Reducing the risk for heart attacks as well as complications like depression.

The Well Aware program also includes access to a team of registered nurses and other health care experts who are available by phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In addition, when you're due for a health screening, check-up, flu shot or exam, Well Aware will mail you a reminder – and even send you periodic self-care tips.

CIGNA developed the Well Aware program for heart disease using nationally recognized resources. It keeps up to date on the most current research practices to make sure its program continues to be effective and simple enough to fit into the busy lives made all the more complicated by heart disease. And because heart disease can lead to other health problems, Well Aware also works with your doctor to encourage screenings for related conditions.

With the right plan, the right tools and the right team of professionals, CIGNA believes people with heart disease can spend less time being patients, and more time living their lives.

## *Did You Know?*

Did you know that everyone age 20 and older should have his or her cholesterol level measured at least once every five years? It is best to have a blood test called a "lipoprotein profile" to find out your cholesterol numbers. This blood test is done after a 9- to 12-hour fast and gives information about your total cholesterol, LDL, HDL and triglycerides.

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