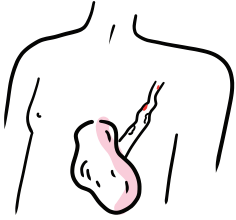


# Understanding Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease (ASCVD)

## What is ASCVD?



**Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease (ASCVD)** happens when fatty deposits, full of cholesterol, build up in your arteries. This buildup can lead to serious health problems like heart disease and stroke.



### Risk Factors for ASCVD

- 1 High Cholesterol/Lipoprotein Levels:** Excess cholesterol and lipoproteins (like LP(a)) can build up in your arteries.
- 2 High Blood Pressure:** Puts extra pressure on your arteries, damaging them.
- 3 Smoking:** Damages arteries and contributes to plaque buildup.
- 4 Diabetes:** High blood sugar can damage blood vessels.
- 5 Obesity:** Extra weight strains your heart.
- 6 Family History:** A family history of heart disease or stroke, especially if it occurred before age 55 for men or 65 for women, increases your risk.



### Prevention and Management: Healthy Lifestyle Choices

- 1 Eat a Balanced Diet:** Focus on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats.
- 2 Exercise Regularly:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week.
- 3 Quit Smoking:** Stopping smoking is key to preventing ASCVD.
- 4 Manage Existing Conditions:** Work with your doctor to control diabetes or high blood pressure with lifestyle changes and medications like statins or blood pressure meds.

## What should you do?

### Diet and Nutrition



- **Healthy Eating:** A Mediterranean diet with vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, whole grains, and fish can reduce your risk of heart problems, especially stroke.
- **Key Tips:**
  - Limit processed meats and sugary drinks.
  - Focus on healthy fats (like olive oil).
  - Reduce salt to help control blood pressure.
  - Replace unhealthy fats (like trans fats) with better options.

### Physical Activity



- **Benefits of Exercise:** Regular activity strengthens your heart, improves blood flow, raises good cholesterol (HDL), and lowers bad cholesterol (LDL).
- **Recommendations:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity, such as walking or cycling, each week.

## Weight Management



- **Importance:** Excess weight significantly contributes to ASCVD by leading to high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, and increased blood sugar levels.
- **Strategies:**
  - Eat a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
  - Engage in regular physical activity.
  - Be mindful of portion sizes to avoid overeating.
  - Use tools like food diaries and support groups to improve dietary habits.

## Managing Stress

- **How Stress Affects Your Heart:** Both short-term and long-term stress can raise blood pressure and cholesterol, increasing your risk of heart problems.
  - **Tips for Managing Stress:**
    - Regular exercise
    - Balanced diet
    - Good sleep
    - Mindfulness or meditation
    - Social support
    - Professional help if needed



## Have Your LP(a) Tested

### What is LP(a)?

- Lipoprotein(a), or LP(a), is a type of fat in the blood that can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. High levels of LP(a) can lead to plaque buildup in the arteries, similar to high cholesterol. It's important to ask your doctor to test your LP(a) levels, especially if you have a family history of heart disease.



## Avoid Smoking and Limit Alcohol



- **Quit Smoking:** Stopping smoking lowers your risk of heart disease and stroke. Consider nicotine replacement or medications to help you quit.
- **Limit Alcohol:** Keep drinking to a minimum to reduce strain on your heart and manage blood pressure.

## Monitoring Blood Pressure, Cholesterol, and Diabetes

- **Blood Pressure:** Aim for readings below 120/80 mmHg. Manage it with a healthy diet, exercise, and regular check-ups.
- **Cholesterol Levels:** Keep LDL low and HDL high by eating healthy and staying active.
- **Diabetes Management:** Monitor blood sugar, eat a balanced diet, stay active, and follow your doctor's advice.

## Taking your Medication

- **Importance:** Medications for ASCVD are crucial for managing your condition. These include statins, antiplatelet agents, beta-blockers, ACE inhibitors, ARBs, calcium channel blockers, diuretics, ezetimibe, and PCSK9 inhibitors. These medications help lower cholesterol, control blood pressure, and prevent heart attacks and strokes.

### Key Tips:

- Understand your medications and how they help.
- Communicate with your doctor if you have any questions.
- Use tools like pillboxes or phone reminders to stay on track.
- Keep your medication routine simple and easy to follow.

## Mission

The HeartLife Foundation is a patient-driven charity whose mission is to transform the quality of life for people living with heart failure by engaging, educating, and empowering a global community to create lasting solutions and build healthier lives.

For more information on ASCVD and other support please visit us at [heartlife.ca/academy/](http://heartlife.ca/academy/)  
[heartlife.academy](http://heartlife.academy)



[www.heartlife.ca](http://www.heartlife.ca)

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