



Intimacy and Illness: Heart Disease

What is heart disease?

Heart disease is a general term used to describe a number of problems affecting the heart and the blood vessels in the heart. Some of the diseases of the heart include:

- **Coronary artery disease (CAD)**—This is the most common heart condition and is the leading cause of heart attacks. With CAD, the arteries become hard and narrow, and blood has difficulty flowing to the heart.
- **Heart failure**—This occurs when the heart is not able to pump blood through the body as well as it should. This results in other organs not getting the blood they need to function properly.
- **Heart arrhythmias**—These are changes to a person's heart beat. It is normal for people to experience heart flutters or heart races once in a while. However, if someone has flutters, as well as dizziness or shortness of breath, they should call their health care provider or 911 immediately.

Who gets heart disease?

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States for both men and women. People of all ages can have heart disease. Some people are born with it, and others may develop it over time due to certain factors.

What causes heart disease?

There are many causes of heart disease, depending on the condition. Some causes for heart disease include:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Lack of exercise
- Poor diet
- Tobacco products

How do I know if I have heart disease?

Heart disease often has no symptoms. If a person does have symptoms, these may be how they appear:

- Chest or arm pain or discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Abnormal heartbeats
- Extreme fatigue

If you have any of these symptoms, it is necessary that you visit your health care provider for a complete medical check-up.





Can I prevent heart disease?

It may be possible for some people to reduce their chances of heart disease affecting them. To help reduce your risk, try these steps:

- Be physically active
- Avoid tobacco products
- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet
- Maintain a normal weight for your body
- Know your numbers (blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglycerides) by getting regular health check-ups and physicals

How can heart disease affect my sexuality?

Heart disease can affect a person's sexuality in a number of ways. If a person's heart has a difficult time pumping blood to the rest of the body, sexual functioning could be affected. A person may have difficulty with arousal. For women, this may mean that they struggle with vaginal dryness and with allowing their body time to prepare for sexual activity. For men, they may have difficulty getting and maintaining erections. These changes are due to a change in blood circulation throughout the body. Both men and women may struggle to reach orgasm as a result of heart disease.

How can I improve my sexuality?

WOMEN

The use of a water-based vaginal lubricant should be used during sexual activity to ensure pleasure, comfort, and safety. Increasing the amount of time spent during foreplay can raise arousal and increase vaginal lubrication. If you are experiencing difficulty reaching orgasm, try clitoral stimulation, which is a nerve-rich area for most women.

MEN

Increasing the amount of time spent during foreplay can increase arousal and the likelihood that a man may be able to get and maintain an erection. Men can also try other types of stimulation to help increase their arousal. Men can also speak to their health care provider about ways to overcome erectile difficulties as a result of heart disease.

It might also be necessary for both men and women to reexamine your definition of sexuality and intimacy. Experimenting with new stimulations and pleasures may be needed—things that may have been pleasurable for you before may no longer elicit the same response. Talk to your health care provider who can create a treatment plan that is specialized for you and your sexuality issues.





What products does Pure Romance offer to help improve my sexuality?

WOMEN

If you find that you have a decreased libido or have a more difficult time reaching orgasm than before, you may want to try an arousal cream, such as Ex-T-Cee, Nympho Niagra, or X-Scream. It is also important to use a water-based vaginal lubricant each time you engage in sexual activity, which can help with vaginal dryness. Try Just Like Me or Sweet Seduction, which are both gentle and non-irritating. If you find that a water-based lubricant is not enough to help with vaginal dryness, try a vaginal moisturizer, such as Fresh Start, which is estrogen-free and very gentle.

MEN

Men who struggle to get and maintain an erection can try an arousal cream, such as X-Scream, to increase their arousal. Men can use a male stimulator to help increase their arousal, as well as the likelihood that they may be able to get an erection. For men experiencing difficulties with erectile dysfunction, a c-ring, such as Jelly Tool Belt, can be worn during intercourse and will help men maintain an erection. (It is recommended to use a thick, creamy lubricant, such as Whipped or Lickity Stiff, when using a c-ring.)

You can also get other product recommendations from your Pure Romance Consultant or by visiting our Web site (www.pureromance.com).

