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## *Health Ministry*

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### **HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR HEART?**

How healthy is your heart? Did you know that 1 in 4 women die of coronary heart disease (**CHD**) while only 1 in 30 women die from breast cancer? Are you aware that CHD is the #1 killer of both men and women in the United States? Do you know that leading a healthy life style can reduce your risk for CHD up to 82%? If you answered “yes” to any one of the three questions listed above, then you probably already know that February is **American Heart Month**.

Before we begin to look at risk factors or treatment, etc, we need to know a little about what CHD is. CHD (Coronary heart disease) is a condition in which a waxy substance called plaque (plak) builds up on the inner walls of the coronary arteries. Because of this factor of plaque, the disease may also be called coronary artery disease (CAD). These arteries supply oxygen-rich blood to your heart muscle.

Plaque narrows the arteries and reduces blood flow to your heart muscle. Reduced blood flow can cause chest pain, especially when you're active. Eventually, an area of plaque can rupture (break open). This causes a blood clot to form on the surface of the plaque. If the clot becomes large enough, it can block the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the portion of heart muscle fed by the artery. Blocked blood flow to the heart muscle causes a heart attack sometimes called a myocardial infarction (MI).

Prompt attention to chest pain, jaw pain or pain radiating down the left arm can often prevent serious injury to the heart muscle. Angina is a symptom of CHD/CAD, which happens with or without physical activity. It is also known to sometimes happen while at rest.

There are 3 types of angina. They are...



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1. **Chronic angina**...occurs during physical activity or emotional stress because the heart is working harder than when the body is at rest. It is often predictable. A common trigger is physical activity and is relieved by rest or nitroglycerine (TNT).
2. **Unstable angina**...means you are at immediate risk of a heart attack and you should seek emergency help as soon as possible. This type angina is unpredictable, more severe, and lasts as long as 30 minutes. There are no common triggers and is relieved by nothing except medical attention—the sooner the better.
3. **Variante angina**...is a rare type of angina which occurs without warning, usually while at rest—between midnight and early morning. There are no common triggers and is relieved by medical attention immediately and medications.

This is the first of four installments on coronary heart disease (CHD). Next week you will learn about the risk factors of CHD.

Mary Ann Stone, RN, CLM  
Minister for Pastoral Care and Health Ministries

Information from

[National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute](#)

[Mayo Clinic Foundation](#)

[A. D. A. M. Medical Encyclopedia](#)



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