

## Glossary of Terms

**Angina (Angina Pectoris):** A temporary discomfort, pain, or tightness in the chest, arm, shoulder, back, neck or jaw that occurs when too little oxygen gets to the heart muscle.

**Angiogram:** An x-ray picture of the heart and its blood vessels.

**Angiography:** The process where dye is injected into the heart or blood vessels so that an x-ray picture (angiogram) can be taken.

**Anticoagulant:** A medication to slow the clotting of blood. It is sometimes called a blood thinner.

**Aorta:** The larger artery that carries oxygen rich blood from the heart to all parts of the body.

**Aortic stenosis:** A narrowing of the aortic valve combined with a thickening or stiffening of its cusps (flaps or leaflets).

**Aortic valve:** The valve, normally having three cusps (flaps or leaflets), lying between the left ventricle and the aorta. It allows the flow of blood into the major artery (aorta), taking blood away from the heart.

**Arrhythmia:** (also know as dysrhythmia) An abnormal rhythm of the heartbeat. It is not necessarily dangerous or significant.

**Artery:** A vessel that carries blood away from the heart. Arteries are high-pressure blood vessels from which you can find a pulse.

**Atrial fibrillation:** Rapid, irregular contractions of the atria followed by the irregular contractions of the ventricles.

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**Atherosclerosis:** The build-up of cholesterol, calcium and blood clotting materials on the inner walls of an artery. This causes a narrowing of the artery. It is sometimes called hardening of the arteries or arteriosclerosis.

**Atrium:** (plural, atria) One of the two upper chambers of the heart. The left and right atria send blood to the left and right ventricles.

**Bradycardia:** A heart rhythm that is slow.

**Body Mass Index (BMI):** A practical marker of optimal weight for your height. It is calculated as weight (Kg) divided by 2 X your height (metres). 18.5-25 is normal, 25-30 is overweight, and 30-40 is obese.

**Cardiac:** Having to do with the heart.

**Cardiology:** The study of the heart and its functions in health and disease.

**Cardiovascular:** Concerning the heart and blood vessels.

**Cholesterol:** A fatty substance that occurs naturally in the body and which is necessary for hormone production, cell metabolism, and other vital processes. There are 2 main types of blood cholesterol -- high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein (LDL). It is generally considered desirable to have high levels of HDL cholesterol and low levels of LDL cholesterol.

**Congenital:** A condition existing at the time of birth. An example may be when the heart or its major blood vessels have not developed properly and do not work as they should.

**Congestive heart failure:** The inability of the heart to pump out all of the blood that returns to it. This may result in blood backing up in the

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veins and lungs or in fluid building up in various parts of the body (liver and legs).

**Constrict:** To narrow or squeeze.

**Coronary artery disease:** Blockage of the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle.

**Dietary Cholesterol:** Cholesterol that comes from animal products in the diet, such as butter, meats, egg yolks, and dairy products. Excess amounts may raise blood cholesterol levels in some people, and contribute to the buildup of plaque on the walls of the arteries and lead to atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).

**Echocardiography:** A diagnostic method in which pulses of sound are transmitted into the body. The echoes returning from the surfaces of the heart and other structures are plotted and recorded as an electronic picture.

**Electrocardiogram:** (ECG or EKG) A graphic record of electrical impulses produced by the heart.

**Endocarditis:** An inflammation or infection of the inner lining (endocardium) of the heart or heart valves.

**Endotracheal tube:** (ET tube or breathing tube) A tube inserted into the windpipe, which is connected to a breathing machine.

**Fibre:** A component of food, which may help to lower blood cholesterol levels. You should aim for a fibre intake of 25 to 30 grams a day. To increase the fibre in your diet, choose more whole grain products, vegetables and fruit, beans, peas, and lentils.

**High blood pressure:** (commonly called hypertension) Blood pressure that is consistently above the normal range.

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**Holter monitor:** A tape recording of the ECG (electrocardiogram) usually taken over a 24-hour period.

**Hydrogenation:** A way to harden a liquid oil to make it spreadable at room temperature. Hydrogenation increases saturated fat while partial hydrogenation increases both saturated fat and trans fatty acids. Saturated fat and trans fatty acids raise blood cholesterol.

**Hypertrophy:** An increase in the bulk of the heart muscle not accompanied by improved strength.

**Impulse:** The movement of a small electrical charge through the cells of the heart muscle that causes it to contract and results in a heartbeat.

**Internal mammary artery:** One of two arteries found running along the inside of the front chest wall that can be used for a graft to bypass blocked coronary arteries.

**Ischemia:** Inadequate blood and oxygen supply to the heart.

**Met:** The energy required to perform a specific activity. One met is equal to lying still in bed and all other activities are graded upward from that.

**Mitral valve:** The heart valve between the left atrium and left ventricle. It has two cusps (flaps or leaflets).

**Monounsaturated Fat:** Tends to lower blood cholesterol levels when it replaces saturated fat in the diet. It is found primarily in olive and canola oils and in foods that contain these oils.

**Myocardial infarction:** Damage to a part of the heart muscle that results from lack of oxygen. Also called a heart attack, MI, coronary occlusion or coronary thrombosis.

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**Myocardium:** The middle layer of the heart wall consisting of heart muscle.

**Nasogastric tube:** (NG tube) A tube passed through the nose or mouth and the esophagus into the stomach to remove air and stomach contents.

**Non-Hydrogenated:** blending a small amount of naturally harder non-hydrogenated fat with liquid oil makes Margarines. This process does not introduce trans fat.

**Pacemaker:** A device that can be used to replace the heart's natural pacemaker (sinus node). This pacemaker controls the heart's beating and rhythm by emitting a series of electrical impulses when the sinus node fails to do so. In a healthy heart, the sinus node is a small mass of special cells in the top of the right atrium that sends out electrical impulses causing the heart to contract or "beat".

**Palpitations:** A fluttering feeling of the heart caused by a change in the heart rate or rhythm.

**Pericardium:** The sac around the heart.

**Polyunsaturated Fat:** Actively lowers blood cholesterol levels. Some are essential fatty acids that our bodies need for good nutrition. Polyunsaturated fat is mainly found in vegetable oils such as safflower, sunflower, corn, and soybean, as well as in foods that contain these oils.

**Postoperative:** (post-op) After surgery.

**Preoperative:** (pre-op) Before surgery.

**Prophylaxis:** A preventive measure.

**Pulmonary artery:** The large artery that takes low-oxygen blood from

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the right ventricle to the lungs.

**Pulmonary stenosis:** A narrowing of the pulmonary valve.

**Pulmonary (pulmonic) valve:** The heart valve between the right ventricle and the pulmonary artery. The pulmonary valve has three flaps or cusps.

**Regurgitation:** The abnormal backward flow of blood through a heart valve.

**Saphenous vein:** A large vein running along the inside of the thigh and calf. This vein is often used as a graft to bypass blocked coronary arteries.

**Saturated Fat:** Raises blood cholesterol levels. It is found mostly in animal products like meat, dairy products made from whole milk, egg yolks, and in certain types of processed foods that contain hydrogenated fats.

**Septum:** A wall that divides the right and left sides of the heart. The atrial septum separates the top chambers and the ventricular septum separates the bottom chambers.

**Stenosis:** The narrowing or constriction of an opening, such as a heart valve.

**Tachycardia:** A fast heart rhythm.

**Trachea:** The windpipe.

**Trans Fatty Acids or Trans Fat:** Have been shown to raise blood cholesterol levels. It is found primarily in foods that contain partially hydrogenated fats, and occurs naturally in smaller quantities in meat and dairy products, including butter.

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**Tricuspid valve:** The valve between the right atrium and right ventricle. It has three cusps (flaps or leaflets).

**Triglycerides (TG):** Fats that circulate in the bloodstream. High levels may be a risk factor heart disease.

**Valve:** A structure made up of membrane flaps that lie between two heart chambers or between a chamber of the heart and a blood vessel. Open valves allow blood flow in only one direction. Closed valves normally prevent blood from passing through an opening.

**Vascular:** Concerning the blood vessels.

**Vein:** A blood vessel that carries low-oxygen (blue) blood back to the heart.

**Ventricle:** The two lower chambers of the heart that pumps blood. The right ventricle pumps blood through the pulmonary artery to the lungs and the left ventricle pumps blood out through the aorta to the body

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