

Symptoms that may require a consultation with a cardiologist

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As people age, many start to experience more aches and pains throughout their bodies. While many symptoms can be chalked up to the natural aging process, it's important to pay special attention to the

cardiovascular system.

"Heart Month is a great time of year to remind people that not all symptoms are created equal when it comes to our cardiovascular health," says Vinayak Nagaraja, M.B.B.S., interventional [cardiologist](#) at Mayo Clinic Health System. "If you have any concerns about symptoms you may be experiencing, it's always a good idea to meet with your primary care provider to determine if you should be referred to a cardiologist."

So what are some [warning signs](#) for underlying problems? Symptoms that suggest you may need a referral to a cardiologist include:

- Chest discomfort.
- Shortness of breath.
- Swelling in your legs.
- High blood pressure.
- Abnormally fast or slow heart rate.
- Dizziness or fainting.
- Strong family history of premature heart disease or cardiac death.
- Leg pain or ulcers resulting from blood vessel diseases.

A cardiologist will evaluate your symptoms, review your [medical history](#) and may recommend [diagnostic tests](#) to appropriately diagnose the cause of your symptoms. The cardiologist also will help your health care team evaluate the best form of treatment for you.

Your individualized treatment plan could include:

- Advice on diet and exercise changes. You can lower your risk of heart disease by eating a low-fat and low-sodium diet, getting at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week, quitting smoking, and limiting alcohol intake. Dr. Nagaraja

recommends eating a Mediterranean diet and avoiding red meat as well as processed food. He also suggests practicing yoga and meditation.

- Medications. If lifestyle changes alone aren't enough, your cardiologist may prescribe medications to control your condition. The type of medication you receive will depend on the type of heart condition and severity.
- A cardiac procedure. If medications aren't enough, your cardiology care team may recommend specific procedures or surgery. The type of procedure or surgery will depend on the type of heart condition and the extent of the damage to your heart.

If your cardiologist decides that you need [cardiac surgery](#), you may be referred to a cardiovascular surgeon who specializes in operations on the heart, lungs and blood vessels. After you recover from the surgery, you will be sent back to your cardiologist for long-term monitoring and care.

"It may seem daunting to think about being diagnosed with a cardiovascular condition that requires [surgical intervention](#), but discovering and treating the issue early can save your life," says Dr. Nagaraja.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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