

Common Cardiovascular Terms

Ablation - a procedure to treat atrial fibrillation that uses small burns or freezes to help break up the electrical signals that cause irregular heartbeats.

Angiography - process of x-ray filming of a blood vessel after an injection of contrast medium (dye).

Anticoagulant - agent that slows down the blood clotting process.

Aneurysm - balloon like bulge in the aorta. The force of blood pumping can split the layers of the artery wall, allowing blood to lead in between them.

Abnormal Aortic - enlarged area in the lower part of the aorta that supplies blood to the body.

Angioplasty - procedure involves passing a catheter with a balloon into the artery to eliminate narrow areas in the coronary arteries.

Arrhythmias - abnormal rate, rhythm or conduction of the heartbeat.

Atrial Fibrillation - irregular and often rapid heart rhythm that can lead to blood clots in the heart.

Atrial Septal Defect - an abnormal hole in the wall between the right and left atrium.

Blood Pressure - pressure exerted by the blood against the blood vessel. Systolic blood pressure (top number) indicates how much pressure is exerted when the heart beats. Diastolic (bottom number) indicates how much pressure is exerted when your heart is resting between beats.

Bradycardia - slow heart rate, usually defined as below 60 beats per minute.

Cardiac Arrest - sudden cessation of cardiac output and effective circulation which requires cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of an AED.

Cardiac Catheterization - introduction of a catheter into the heart by way of a blood vessel for the purpose of determining heart disease.

Cardiac Tamponade - acute compression of the heart caused by fluid accumulation in the pericardial cavity.

Carotid Artery Stenosis - narrowing of the blood vessels in the neck that carry blood from the heart to the brain. Can be caused by cholesterol build-up in the blood vessels (atherosclerosis).

Congenital Heart Disease - heart abnormality present at birth.

Coronary Artery Bypass - surgical procedure of implanting grafts to reroute blood to the heart muscle by detouring it around blocked arteries.

Coronary Artery Disease - narrowing of the coronary arteries sufficiently to prevent adequate blood supply to the myocardium.

Coronary CT - scan of coronary arteries looking for evidence of atherosclerosis.

Deep Vein Thrombosis - when a blood clot (thrombus) forms in one or more of the deep veins in the body.

Echocardiogram - picture of the structure and function of the heart and valves using sound waves.

Heart Failure - condition in which the heart has trouble pumping blood through the body due to the heart muscle weakening and the ventricle no longer contracting normally.

Heart Murmur - a swishing or whooshing sound heard through a stethoscope when blood flows abnormally over the heart valves.

Heart Palpitations - unpleasant sensations of irregular or forceful beating of the heart.

Hypertension - a blood pressure of 140/90 or higher is considered hypertension. High blood pressure makes the heart work harder to pump blood to the body and it contributes to hardening of the arteries.

Ischemic - the state of not having enough oxygen rich blood flow delivered to the heart muscle.

Mitral Valve - the inflow valve for the left ventricle. It closes when the ventricle squeezes blood out to the body and then opens to let more blood into the ventricle.

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) - provide high resolution images that allow cardiologists to distinguish normal from abnormal heart muscle and to assess cardiac structure and function in patients.

Myocardial Infarction (Heart attack) - necrosis (death) of myocardial cells due to prolonged ischemia

Pacemaker - a battery powered device that is used to regulate the heart rate by discharging electrical impulses when the patient needs them.

Peripheral Vascular Disease - decreased blood flow to the peripheral vessels of the body (arterial or venous)

Stent - a wire mesh introduced into an artery to prevent closure.

Stress testing - shows how your heart works during physical activity and can reveal problems with blood flow within your heart.

Syncope - transient loss of consciousness due to inadequate blood flow to the brain.

TAVR - minimally invasive procedure to replace a narrowed aortic valve that fails to open properly.

Tricuspid Valve - the inflow valve for the right ventricle. It closes when the ventricle squeezes blood to the lungs and then opens to let more blood in.

Valve Replacement - an artificial valve of any kind, synthetic or animal.

Varicose Veins - veins in the leg that may become weakened and enlarged, particularly after blood clots have formed in them.

Watchman device - implant for people with atrial fibrillation not caused by a heart valve problem who need an alternative to blood thinners.