

Diagnosing Heart Disease

A HEARTLIFE PATIENT & CAREGIVER GUIDE



FOR PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Heart disease is a leading cause of illness and death, but with early diagnosis and good care, many people live long, healthy lives. This guide explains how heart disease is diagnosed, what tests are used, and how you and your loved ones can prepare.

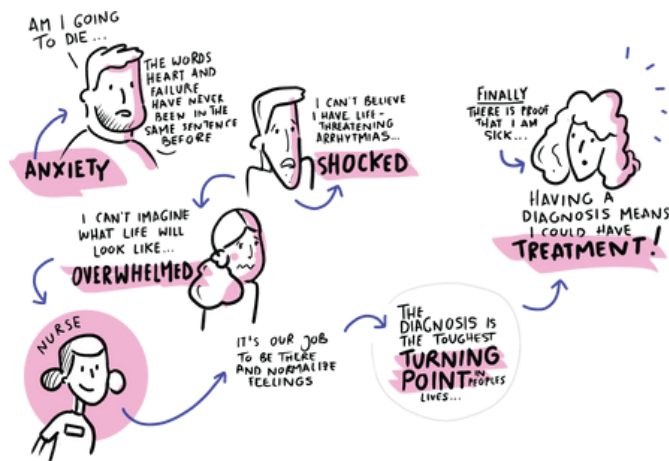
WHAT IS HEART DISEASE?

Heart disease is common, but early diagnosis and the right care make a big difference. This guide shows what to expect during testing and how you and your loved ones can get ready.



THE DIAGNOSIS JOURNEY

The diagnostic journey can be complex, but it also opens the door to understanding, support, and better health ahead.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Everyone wants to know what's next — and with knowledge and care, the path forward becomes clearer.



HOW IS HEART DISEASE DIAGNOSED?

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01 BIOMARKERS

- **NT-proBNP:** Helps detect and monitor heart failure
- **Troponin:** Identifies heart damage, especially during heart attacks
- **Other labs:** Cholesterol, Lp(a), electrolytes, kidney function, A1c

02 IMAGING TESTS

- **Echocardiogram (Echo):** Ultrasound of the heart to check structure and function
- **Cardiac MRI:** Provides detailed images of the heart muscle and inflammation
- **CT Scan (Calcium Score or Angiogram):** Detects blocked arteries

03 GENETIC TESTING AND AI TOOLS

- Can identify inherited conditions or risks
- AI helps detect patterns earlier and supports treatment planning

04 ELECTROCARDIOGRAM ECG OR EKG

- Measures the electrical activity of the heart
- Detects arrhythmias, heart attacks, and more

WHY DIAGNOSIS MATTERS

- Early detection saves lives
- It allows for earlier treatment
- It helps prevent complications



WHAT TO EXPECT

- You may need several tests over time
- Some tests are done in a hospital, others at your doctor's office
- Always ask what each test is for and how to prepare

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CARE TEAM

- What is the purpose of this test?
- What are we looking for?
- What do the results mean?
- Will this change my treatment plan?

TIPS FOR PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- Learn about the tests and treatments
- Keep a folder of test results and notes
- Attend all follow-ups, even if you feel fine
- Advocate for yourself or your loved one

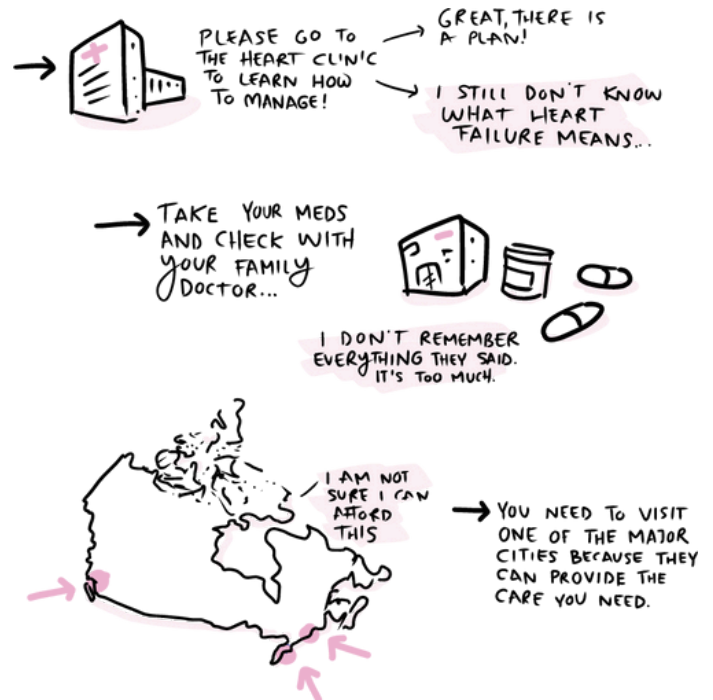
TIP

Bring a support person and a notebook to appointments. Take notes and ask questions.



THE DISCHARGE JOURNEY

Leaving the hospital marks the beginning of a new phase in your heart care journey. Understanding your discharge plan, medications, and follow-up appointments helps you feel confident and supported as you return home and continue your recovery.



You are not alone.

Many people live well with heart disease—with the right care and support.

Take Action Today!

Advocating for your heart health starts with understanding heart disease and other conditions that affect your cardiovascular system. Learn your numbers, follow your care plan, and work closely with your healthcare team. Small, consistent steps can make a big difference for your long-term heart health.



HEARTLIFE ACADEMY

For more information on diagnosing and other support please visit us at heartlife.ca/academy/



HeartLife FOUNDATION

Canada's patient-led heart disease charity
"It's About Life, Not Failure™"



join us at heartlife.ca

Our Mission

The HeartLife Foundation is a patient-driven charity whose mission is to transform the quality of life for people living with cardiovascular diseases by engaging, educating, and empowering a global community. We aim to create lasting solutions, drive innovation, and build healthier lives for patients, caregivers, and families worldwide.