



## DECISION AID

### Cardiovascular diseases

#### What are my treatment options?

You have been diagnosed with a cardiovascular disease. These diseases affect the heart and blood vessels. They include things like high blood pressure, coronary artery disease (CAD) and irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia).

The symptoms and causes, outlook, required diagnostic examinations and preventive measures often differ depending on your specific condition. The treatment options often differ too. For some cardiovascular diseases, medication is an effective option. For others, heart surgery is effective. There are also lots of cardiovascular diseases that respond well to a number of treatments – sometimes as different alternatives, sometimes combined.

The aim of this decision aid is to help you work out with your family doctor and specialists what your treatment options are. Then you can decide with them which one(s) to choose.

#### PERSONAL DECISION

This decision aid doesn't include everything you need to know to make a decision. You still need to talk to your family doctor.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Don't let anyone pressure you into choosing a certain treatment. Even if you find the symptoms very distressing, make sure you take the time to gather information and make a decision.

#### WHAT TREATMENT OPTIONS ARE YOU CONSIDERING?

Write down the different treatment options and any alternative options you're considering:

Option 1

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Option 2

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Option 3

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If you're not sure, you can ask your doctor. Here are some typical treatments for cardiovascular diseases to give you some ideas:

- **Medication** (like drugs to stop clotting or reduce blood pressure)
- **Non-drug treatments** (e.g. relaxation exercises to relieve stress, or electrical cardioversion to treat an irregular heartbeat)
- **Procedures:**
  - Cardiac catheterization, where a thin plastic tube is pushed through a blood vessel until it reaches the heart. This procedure is used for things like widening narrowed arteries, destroying tissue that is causing an irregular heartbeat (ablation), and replacing heart valves.
  - Open-heart surgery (e.g. bypass surgery or correction of heart deformities present at birth)
  - Implantation of devices like pacemakers or defibrillators

Often it's also important for you to take action yourself – by changing your lifestyle, for example. This could mean changing your diet or getting more exercise. Waiting to see what happens or deciding against treatment are options too.

Typically, if you need emergency treatment, you won't be well enough to make any decisions.

One thing you can do though is to think about what you want to be done in these types of situations. Then you can write it down (in a living will, for example) and discuss it with your family.

## PROS AND CONS OF THE TREATMENTS:

Answer these questions for each option:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
<b>What does the treatment involve?</b> How long would I have to take medication, for example? What will happen before, during and after the procedure? Will I have to go to the hospital?			
<b>What is the goal of the treatment?</b> Is it meant to relieve the symptoms? Is it meant to reduce the risk of complications like heart attacks or strokes?			
<b>What are the possible side effects?</b> What side effects can the medication cause? What complications can the procedures cause?			
<b>Is this treatment a good idea for me?</b> Do I need to meet certain criteria? Or do my other conditions mean I can't have the treatment?			

## HELP WITH YOUR DECISION

You may still be unsure about which treatment you would prefer. You can write down your thoughts and questions here:

Which treatment would I consider?		What do I like about it?	What don't I like about it?
	<input type="radio"/>		
	<input type="radio"/>		
	<input type="radio"/>		

## IF YOU STILL AREN'T SURE: WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED IN ORDER TO MAKE A DECISION?

With all the different pros and cons to consider, it can be hard to choose a treatment.

If you need more help:

- You will find links to further information on the next page.
- You can talk to your doctor again.
- You can also talk to a different doctor. You will find information about this option on the next page, too.
- You can talk about it with your friends and family.
- You can contact a patient information center or a support group.



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**You will find in-depth information about the following topics on the internet:**

- Cardiovascular diseases:  
[www.informedhealth.org/topic-areas/heart-and-circulation.html](http://www.informedhealth.org/topic-areas/heart-and-circulation.html)
- Second medical opinion  
[www.informedhealth.org/SecondOpinion](http://www.informedhealth.org/SecondOpinion)

#### **Preparing for the doctor's appointment**

Do you still have any questions? What are you most concerned about? Write down any questions or thoughts you may have, and take this decision aid with you to the appointment. You can ask the doctor about anything you would like to know or discuss anything you are worried about.

You will find a list of questions – and can choose those that are most important to you – here:

- [www.informedhealth.org/questions](http://www.informedhealth.org/questions)

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#### **Publishing details**

This decision aid was developed by the Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG, Germany). You will find information about our work and the sources used here:

- [www.informedhealth.org/our-approach](http://www.informedhealth.org/our-approach)

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