

## *WHAT IS HEART DISEASE?*

Heart disease is the name given to a group of conditions that affect one or more functions of the heart. Primary among these diagnoses is coronary artery disease, which occurs when the arteries supplying blood to the heart – coronary arteries – become partially blocked or clogged

These blockages, an accumulation of cholesterol and other fatty substances that calcify and harden, make it difficult for the heart muscle to be supplied with sufficient blood. The resulting strain placed on the heart leads to physical discomfort such as pain or tightness in the chest and shortness of breath, and can result in a heart attack if left untreated. Coronary artery disease is the most common type of heart disease. It is the leading cause of death in the United States of for both men and women.

## *WHAT CAUSES HEART DISEASE?*

While science has not pinpointed a specific cause for coronary artery disease, it is known as a slow and complex disease that can start as early as childhood. Certain conditions increase an individual's risk of developing coronary artery disease, including high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, cigarette or tobacco smoking, diabetes, obesity and lack of physical activity.

## *WHAT CAN A BLOOD TEST TELL ME ABOUT HEART DISEASE?*

A lipid panel evaluates the risk for coronary artery disease by measuring four types of fats (lipids) in the blood: total serum cholesterol (used to build cell membranes and hormones), triglyceride levels (stored fats and oils), HDL cholesterol (so-called “good cholesterol”, that removes arterial deposits and/or prevents their formation) and LDL values (“bad cholesterol” that is associated with increased risk of coronary artery disease). The type and amount of lipids in your blood provide important clues about your risk of having a heart attack, stroke or other blood vessel damage. The results of the total cholesterol test can also assist in evaluating other diseases, including inflammation of the pancreas, liver disease, or disorders of the thyroid gland.

*For more information regarding the services provided by the Pathology Center,  
call (402) 354-4541 or (888) 432-8980.*

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