Glossary of Terms (Cardiovascular)

- **Angina**: symptoms that occur when the heart muscle can’t get enough oxygen-rich blood. Often appears as pressure, tightness, aching, or pain in the chest, arm, neck, or jaw.

- **Angiogram**: a special x-ray of a blood vessel.

- **Aorta**: the body’s largest artery. It carries blood from the heart to the rest of the body.

- **Arrhythmia**: an abnormal heartbeat.

- **Arteriosclerosis**: when artery walls thicken and lose elasticity. Sometimes called “hardening of the arteries.”

- **Artery**: a blood vessel that carries blood from the heart to the body.

- **Atherosclerosis**: the buildup of plaque within artery walls.

- **Atria (singular: atrium)**: the heart’s two upper chambers. They receive blood from the lungs and body.

- **Balloon angioplasty**: a procedure that uses a balloon-tipped catheter to open an artery narrowed or blocked by plaque.

- **Blood (serum) cholesterol**: a fatty substance produced by the body and carried in the blood. Can build up within artery walls as plaque.

- **Blood pressure**: a measurement indicating the force of blood as it presses against artery walls while moving through vessels.

- **Blood vessels**: tubes that carry blood throughout the body. Arteries and veins are blood vessels.

- **Bypass**: a new pathway for blood flow.

- **CABG (pronounced “cabbage”)**: another term for coronary artery bypass graft surgery.

- **Cardiomyopathy**: weakening of, or structural change in, the heart muscle that reduces the heart’s ability to pump.

- **Catheter**: a long, thin, flexible plastic tube.

- **Coronary arteries**: blood vessels that wrap around the heart and supply the heart muscle with oxygen-rich blood.

- **Coronary artery disease**: blocked or narrowed coronary arteries.

- **Diastolic pressure**: the pressure of blood against the inside of artery walls between heartbeats. Appears as the bottom number in a blood pressure measurement.

- **Electrocardiogram**: a test that records the way electrical signals move through the heart. Often called an ECG or EKG.

- **Heart attack**: an event that occurs when oxygen-rich blood can’t get to part of the heart muscle. Can cause permanent damage.

- **Hypertension**: another word for “high blood pressure.”

- **Myocardial infarction**: death of heart muscle tissue. Also known as a heart attack.

- **Plaque**: a deposit of fatty material (including cholesterol) within artery walls.

- **Pulmonary artery**: the large artery that carries blood from the heart to the lungs to get oxygen.
- **Stenosis**: the narrowing of an artery, often caused by plaque buildup.

- **Stroke**: a blockage or rupture in a blood vessel that cuts off blood flow to part of the brain. May cause brain damage. Also known as a brain attack or CVA (cerebrovascular accident).

- **Systolic pressure**: the pressure of blood against the inside of artery walls during a heartbeat (when the heart pumps). Appears as the top number in a blood pressure measurement.

- **Ultrasound**: a test that uses sound waves to create images of structures inside the body.

- **Valves**: “doorways” that open and close to let blood move and prevent backflow of blood. There are valves between the heart’s chambers.

- **Vein**: a blood vessel that carries blood from the body back to the heart.

- **Ventricles**: the heart’s two lower chambers. They pump blood to the body and lungs.