



Heart Disease

Some people don't realize the importance of maintaining good health until they encounter a problem. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and outlook can make you feel more revived, and also lead to having a healthier, stronger heart.

Heart Disease, also known as cardiovascular disease, is a leading cause of deaths among both men and women in the United States. A heart disease is defined as any damage to your heart or its surrounding blood vessels that causes it to function improperly. There are several types of heart disease, with coronary heart disease (CHD) and stroke being the most common. Every 34 seconds, an American suffers from a heart attack, and a death related to heart disease occurs each minute.

Taking good care of your heart and body through a balance of fitness, diet, and positive lifestyle choices can improve your overall well-being, and can serve as a preventive measure to heart disease.



Risks of Heart Disease

There are several health problems that can increase your chances of developing a heart condition. Minimizing or preventing these risks is key to maintaining a healthier heart. High risk factors of heart disease include:

High Cholesterol

Unhealthy cholesterol can build up, resulting in the formation of an oily substance called plaque. Plaque can collect in the walls of your arteries, causing damage to the walls and prevention of the proper blood flow toward the heart.

High Blood Pressure

Blood pressure can rise and fall due to emotions/feelings, as well as diet and lack of exercise. High blood pressure is known to be a silent killer because it may occur without any given symptoms. However, given a period of time, it can develop into a serious problem damaging organs and vessels throughout your body. High blood pressure is a common cause of heart disease, simply because it stresses your heart to work harder.

Tobacco Usage

Smoking increases the chance of developing heart disease and suffering from heart attacks. It increases the development of blood clots and raises blood pressure. Smoking limits the amount of oxygen carried through your blood. Second hand smoke which can lead to a number of serious heart problems can also be a risk factor for nonsmokers.

Physical Inactivity

Not exercising or staying physically active can lead to a number of medical problems, including unhealthy heart conditions. People who are physically inactive have a higher chance of becoming obese, which is linked to several health problems such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Engage in healthy alternatives to increase your physical activity, such as using the stairs instead of the elevator, or parking a little further away from your destination. Start your journey toward a healthy heart in small increments!

Alcohol Usage

Consuming an excessive amount of alcohol will result in a direct toxic effect on your heart. Drinking too much causes fat levels to increase in your blood, thus causing your calorie intake to also escalate. In addition to the adverse impact to your

heart health, excessive drinking can also increase your risk for stroke and diabetes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Men and Heart Disease

- In 2005, heart disease was the cause of death in 410,000 American men.
- The average age for a first heart attack for men is 66 years.
- Almost half of men who have a heart attack under age 65 die within 8 years.
- Between 70% and 89% of sudden cardiac events occur in men.



How to Stay Heart Healthy

Eat a heart-healthy diet. Managing a healthy weight is essential to developing a stronger heart. Give up excessive carbohydrates/fats, and eat a proper nutritious diet filled with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fish.

Stay physically active. Exercise doesn't have to always involve doing hundreds of tiring sit ups/pushups. A little exercise can go a long way in keeping a healthy heart. Light exercises such as taking a 20 minute walk/jog/swim can help you build a stronger heart.

Visit the doctor. Going to the doctor for regular check-ups is a good way to prevent heart disease. Your doctor can help you identify any early symptoms and begin immediately to get you back on a healthy heart track.

Research your family tree. Learn your family medical history, especially as it relates to heart disease. Provide your doctor whatever information you uncover, so he/she can factor that into your treatment. Arm your physician with as much family history as you can.

Don't use tobacco. Smokers tend to have twice the risk of heart attacks than non-smokers. Seek support from family and friends, or develop a healthy coping method to end your smoking habit and take your first step toward a healthier heart.

Lower your cholesterol. Elimination of unhealthy saturated or trans fats from your diet and replacing them with foods that have monounsaturated fats can greatly help reduce your cholesterol levels. Heart-healthy monounsaturated fats are found in avocado, peanut butter, pecans, salmon, and oatmeal.

Control high blood pressure. Limit your intake of sodium to 6 grams or less. By limiting your daily intake, you can lower your blood pressure and reduce the risk of a heart attack. Eating healthy foods rich in potassium, magnesium and calcium can also help control your blood pressure.

Don't skip meals. Eating only one meal a day doesn't always result in weight loss. Rather, skipping meals can actually slow your metabolism, resulting in less calories being burned. People tend to overindulge when they skip a meal so try to always eat breakfast and small to moderate quantities of fruits and vegetables throughout the day to stay heart healthy.

There are several resources you can depend on for information on **Heart Health**. These additional resources are provided below.

For general information about Heart Disease and Stroke:

www.healthypeople.gov

www.cdc.gov/women/heart

For information about the The Heart Truth Campaign sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI):

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/educational/hearttruth

For more information about National Wear Red Day sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in partnership with the American Heart Association:

www.goredforwomen.org

This is published as part of the efforts in the DoD's Employee Wellness Campaign 2010.

This information is not meant as a substitute for personal medical advice. If you have a current medical condition you should consult

**Statistics and facts in the brochure were provided from cdc.gov*

DO
YOU



YOUR



Information on Heart Health

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