



Nine Tips For A Healthy Heart

A GUIDE TO HEART DISEASE PREVENTION



The Facts

Heart Disease remains the No. 1 killer of men and women in the U.S. with annual death rates exceeding those from all cancers combined. Unlike many other diseases, death rates relative to heart disease have not dramatically improved in the last 100 years, despite many technological advances in this realm of medicine. Sadly, in as many as 150,000 cases a year, the first, last and only “symptom” of coronary disease is a fatal heart attack.

Diet & Lifestyle

Much of the chronic disease in the nation, including heart disease, can be traced to poor diet and lifestyle habits.

The average American diet contains too much sugar and starch and often includes processed foods with trans-saturated fats and chemical preservatives that can contribute to a variety of health issues. In addition, it lacks adequate amounts of vegetables and fruits as well as beneficial oils such as fish oil, olive oil and nut oils, which provide significant health benefits.

Also, many of us get very little exercise, manage stress poorly and fail to get enough sleep. Combining these things with poor diet easily explains why so many of us are struggling with chronic health issues at increasingly younger ages. Increased illness cuts our lives short and increases our health costs as well.

Conventional Medicine

Most of Western medicine is focused on intervention AFTER someone becomes sick instead of prevention aimed at avoiding illness. In addition, conventional methods for determining someone’s risk for having a heart attack or stroke are largely inadequate, meaning that those of us most at risk are often ignored. This is a recipe for disaster, as evidenced by our current epidemic of heart attacks, strokes and coronary death.

Take Action Now

For many of us, the path to a healthy heart is easily within our grasp BUT will require some changes to how we have been doing things. The recommendations on the next page are intended for the general population and will go a long way in creating and maintaining a strong and healthy heart long into older age, regardless of family history:



1. Blood Pressure

Keep your blood pressure under control. Focus on regular exercise, maintaining a good body weight, and adequate sleep. An inexpensive medicine to adequately control blood pressure may be required as well.



2. Diet

Eat a diet high in fruits and vegetables, including pigmented berries like strawberries and blueberries. Also get adequate amounts of healthy oils like olive oil, oily fish such as salmon, almonds and walnuts, and adequate proteins. Avoid excessive carbohydrates, especially refined carbohydrates like white bread, white pasta, sugar, rice and potatoes.



3. Exercise

Get exercise at least the equivalent of a brisk 20-minute walk a minimum of 3 times a week. This provides 60 minutes a week of exercise, which can provide 90% of the benefit that any level of exercise can provide. While we aren't all athletes, there are very few people who cannot get a brisk 20-minute walk 3 times a week.



4. Vitamin D

Consider taking 1,000 IU of Vitamin D-3 daily, although you may require more than this. You may want to get a Vitamin D blood-level test to help you and your physician determine the best replacement dose.



5. Stress

Manage stress, as this is a significant factor that affects many aspects of health. High blood pressure, weight gain, sleep disorders, and heart attacks are often linked to stress. Regular exercise and adequate sleep are the foundation of stress management.



6. Sleep

Get enough sleep. Getting less than 5 hours of sleep per night is also a significant risk factor for a heart attack. Seven or eight hours is optimal for most people. If you require over 10 hours of sleep, this is often a sign of other medical problems.



7. Dental Hygiene

Pay attention to dental hygiene. Brush your teeth at least twice a day, floss daily and visit your dentist regularly as periodontal disease has been strongly associated with heart disease.



8. Weight Management

Manage your weight. Being too thin or too heavy are both risk factors for coronary death. Too often, people think that because they are thin, they are not at risk for a heart attack. Surprisingly, although morbid obesity provides the greatest risk for coronary death, the second highest risk category for coronary death is being too thin.



9. Fish Oil

Taking fish oil supplements, at least 1,000 mg of fish oil omega-3 daily, is associated with many health benefits, including a reduction in sudden coronary death.

Incorporating these behaviors into everyday life may be all that many of us need to maintain a strong and healthy heart. However, to make sure you are doing enough, the USW Local 286 Heart Health Promotion, in collaboration with the Temple Heart & Vascular Institute program, offers a heart scan to males age 40 and over and females age 50 and over. This heart scan is the best tool to screen for the presence of coronary heart disease and to measure the adequacy of preventive strategies.



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