

FOR A HEALTHY HEART

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EXTENT OF HEART DISEASES

Diseases of heart and blood vessels account for approximately 10-12 million deaths every year. Out of these roughly 2.4 million deaths take place in the India alone. There is virtually an epidemic of heart diseases in the country. Roughly 10% of people in age group of 30 years and above in urban areas and half of them in the rural areas are suffering from blocked arteries. Its further estimated that almost 25-30% of urban population and 10-12% of the rural population suffer from high blood pressure. Even the incidence of diabetes in our country is much higher and roughly 7-9% of urban population and 1-3% of rural population suffer from diabetes. All this translate in to high economic loss to the country and to the individual, as well as loss of life and the attendant miseries. Almost 140 people out of every 1 lac population in India die of acute heart attack and this figure is much higher than the rest of the world. In India the prevalence of blocked arteries of the heart is roughly 2-4 times higher than with other population groups world wide, and this is just not confined to Indians in India but also to Indians in western countries. The chance of blockages of the arteries of heart and heart attacks in United States of America is four times higher in Indians than the local white population and six times higher in Indians as compared to the local Chinese population. Therefore it is not wrong to say that there is virtually an epidemic of heart and blood vessel diseases in this country and one really needs to take measures to

prevent the spread of this epidemic. One of the cheapest and easiest way of keeping away from these problems is to take care of the risk factors.

Know your risks for Coronary Artery Disease (Heart Attacks)

Check if you:

- have high blood pressure or diabetes.
- have high cholesterol
- smoke
- weigh too much
- exercise less than 3 times a week
- eat high fat, high cholesterol food each day
- have family members who have had a stroke or heart attack before the age of 55years
- are a man over 45 years of age
- are a woman in the post menopausal age
- are often tense, stressed or pressed for time
- get angry quickly

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Damage to artery wall

High blood pressure is sneaky. You can have it and not know it. While it damages the arterial walls, letting fat and cholesterol build-up more easily, you may not feel a thing. Over time, much damage is done causing strokes, heart attacks or kidney failure. Blood pressure can be fairly easy to control. You can bring it down with weight loss, exercises, medications, relaxation and not smoking. Some people are also asked to eat less salt.

DIABETES :

High blood sugar risks

narrowed arteries

If you have diabetes, do everything you can to control blood sugar, Diabetes puts a person at very high risk for build up of fat and cholesterol in the arteries, of not only heart, but of virtually every organ of the body.

SMOKING:

Less oxygen to the heart

Tobacco smoke (yours or someone else's):

- Narrows blood vessels
- Can cause coronary artery spasm
- Scars the lung and reduces oxygen exchange
- Increases heart rate
- Shortens life span
- Lowers good cholesterol

It may take more than one try to quit smoking. So don't give up. Each try improves your chances of quitting for good

OVERWEIGHT:

An overworked heart

Over weight people tend to have these heart risks:

- more cholesterol in the blood
- higher blood pressure
- more shortness of breath
- more diabetes

- more work load on the heart

A steady weight loss program achieved, with low-calorie, low-fat food, and exercise, is the best way to lose weight and keep it off.

FOOD HABITS

Too much fat and cholesterol

Fats are:

- Saturated
- Polyunsaturated
- Monounsaturated

The saturated fats are the worst for you, but all fats should be counted in your food. Your goal is to eat very little fat. Foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol have been linked to heart disease. Most often these are animal foods like meat and dairy products. Saturated fats can also be found in vegetable oils such as coconut and palm oils. As a rule, plant foods (such as beans, grains, vegetables and fruits) have less fat and cholesterol than animal food. Your aim should be to keep the total cholesterol as low as possible and certainly below 200mg or less and to consume no more than 20% of your calories as fat.

EXERCISE

To pump well, the heart needs to be strong. You can improve the strength of your heart with a 30-60 minutes brisk walk 3-6 days a week. Or you can do more. It depends on what you like to do and if you are training for a high level of fitness.

There are 3 types of exercise:

- Stretching (staying loose)
- Aerobics (for blood flow and oxygen)
- Strengthening (toning or building muscles)

The most important exercise for your heart is aerobic exercise.

Walking, jogging, running, swimming, dancing and cycling are aerobic.

STRESS:

With stress the body makes more Adrenaline. This is a hormone that makes the heart pump faster and harder and makes blood vessels clamp down, which are all harmful.

You can't get rid of stress, but you can learn how to be less angry, less hostile and less uptight. Even a 10 minute break gives your heart and blood pressure relief.

Use one of these to stop and slow down:

- Breathing deeply and slowly to get relaxed
- A 10 to 20 minutes rest
- A 30 minutes brisk walk
- Massage, meditation or a visual journey