

Five Heart Care Tips

The heart is a muscular organ responsible for pumping blood through the blood vessels by repeated, rhythmic contractions. Taking specific steps to care for your heart can prolong your lifetime by decades.

Diseases of the heart are the leading cause of death, causing a higher mortality than cancer. Coronary heart disease is responsible for 1 in 5 deaths. Some 7 million men and 6 million women are living with some form of coronary heart disease. This means that roughly every 65 seconds someone dies of a coronary event.

In India, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death. The deaths due to CVD in India were 32% of all deaths in 2007 and are expected to rise from 2000 to 2.03 million in 2010.

These are serious numbers. The alarming growth in our country proves the effect changing lifestyles habits has on heart disease. There are a number of reasons that cause heart disease. Some you can control, some you cant. Factors such as heredity, gender, diabetes and age are major risk factors.

Family history plays an important part in our fate. **If two immediate family members have had a heart attack before age 55, the risk of developing heart disease is 5-10 times greater than in a family with no history.**

Hormones play a complex role in the picture. Estrogen delays the onset of disease in most women by about ten years. Statistics suggest that the risk for men is higher in the earlier years, whereas women have a higher prevalence for heart disease after menopause.

People with diabetes have a greater chance of getting heart disease. You should also have your blood sugar levels checked regularly if you suspect you may have diabetes or if you have a family history of diabetes.

What you can control is your diet, exercise, smoking, stress and regular tests. Here are five simple heart care tips you can easily follow starting today.

Eat Less Carbohydrates : A diet high in carbohydrates contributes significantly to heart disease. Research has found out precisely, how cornflakes, white bread, french fries and similar foods containing high amounts of carbohydrates aggravate the probability of a heart disease. Arterial stress was

observed in people who consumed foods with a high glycemic index such as cornflakes, sugar and french fries. It was discovered that foods having a high glycemic index made the brachial arteries swell for many hours.

Stop Smoking : Smoking is a major cause of heart disease. The American Heart Association has named cigarette smoking as the most dangerous of the modifiable risk factors. Overall, **smokers experience a 70% greater death rate from heart and blood vessel disease than nonsmokers.** Heavy smokers (twenty or more cigarettes per day) have a death rate two to three times greater than nonsmokers.

Exercise : There's been a lot told about the benefits of exercise. All you need is 20 to 30 minutes of exercise that keeps your heart at 60% to 70% of your maximum heart beat rate. For adults that is about 110 beats per minute. Walking fast is helpful. The best thing is to jog or even run. Interval training has a number of benefits. This is one of the most simplest and powerful things one can do to keep the heart healthy.

Reduce Stress : More and more evidence suggests a relationship between the risk of cardiovascular disease and environmental and psychosocial factors. These factors include job strain, relationship issues and social isolation. Acute and chronic stress may affect factors such as high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, smoking, physical inactivity and overeating. Try to consciously observe when you are getting stressed and take steps to relax yourself. Deep breathing helps. Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Inhale for 4-5 seconds and slowly exhale. Do this 3-4 times whenever you feel you are stressed.

Note : While there is more research required to establish a links between stress and heart disease, Depression is an established risk factor for the development of coronary heart disease (Coronary Heart Disease).

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