

6 Ways to Ward Off Heart Disease

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Now that more information is being made available to the general public on heart attacks, we know that you could be at risk whether you are male or female.

In fact, chances are pretty good that you might be a candidate for a heart attack if you are overweight, smoke, don't exercise, have high blood pressure and/or high cholesterol.

Additionally, you don't even have to be overweight or even a certain age.

You may say, so what? We all are going to die someday. Let's face it, there's a wide variety of things that can affect the condition of our heart and lungs like, well, anything we do in excess.

Let's take a look at some potential problems:

Don't forget high blood pressure. The damage can sometimes be irreparable if the blood pressure is consistently high. Some high blood pressure can be treated with medication but must also include a change in lifestyle including a fitness plan.

Weighing in next is high cholesterol. Again, there is some medicine that can make a difference, but modifications in diet make the biggest impact.

Lack of exercise runs hand in hand with heart disease. Twenty to 30-minute daily workouts are imperative for a healthy heart. Let's take a look at some ways to get a healthy heart:

Quit smoking. I know first-hand that this is terribly hard to do. I used to smoke at least three to four cigarettes a day. In one of my college classes, Drug Use and Abuse, I learned that nicotine was just as addictive as the top drugs, right up there with LSD and cocaine. I was shocked!

Nicotine has chemicals that severely damage blood vessels and deteriorate lungs leading to a failed heart, asthma, emphysema, dizziness and others, and this is only a partial listing.

Exercise. If you cannot find the time to exercise for a period of more than 20 to 30 minutes each day, did you know that cleaning house is an excellent way to burn calories? Something else that is often overlooked is spot exercising. This doesn't do much for the heart, or at least not as much, but you can spot train by focusing on various body areas in 10 minute segments and, depending on how fast you do them, it is better than doing nothing at all.

For example, stomach exercises, can actually make a difference to your stomach if you do them every other day for at least 10 minutes. Arm exercises can make a difference in the same sequence and so on.

Use stairs instead of the elevator. If you can walk up and down stairs, do it as opposed to riding the elevator. Stop every third step and do a leg raise by lifting up one leg in the position of a crane (the bird) and lifting up and down on the opposite leg for a count of 10 times. Switch legs and repeat. You can see how these compliment in strengthening your heart, not to mention your leg muscles, but would have to be done quickly to get your heart rate up to be considered a cardio workout.

Eat healthy. If possible, take a multivitamin. There are so many to choose from that it is best to buy smaller containers first to see if it is the right vitamin for your system. For example, many vitamins do not set well with my system and have a tendency to make me hungry. When I asked the doctor about this, he said to take the vitamin at night.

Try to eat more fiber. Fiber can come in fruits, cereals, oats and plenty of other ways. Try to stay away from packaged foods and if you must grab something unhealthy, at least eat an apple or pear afterward to help absorb some of the fat.

Eat smaller meals and more frequently. This is easier said than done. However, if you really make a special effort, it can be done and you will see the benefits sooner than you think.

Eliminate Stress. Has anyone ever told you that you were going to die due to a high stress level? It's true. People in the medical fields have noticed that oftentimes in the brief periods, of let's say, just a few weeks, after devastating emotional trauma (like a layoff, being fired, death of a relative, close friend, pet, spouse, and/or bankruptcy, divorce or a huge disappointment), a heart attack occurs and oftentimes, age is not a factor, but the stress level is a major contributing factor.

Of course, the best alternative to stress is to stop doing whatever it is that is causing the problem in the first place.

Oftentimes, this is as simple as delegating responsibilities to others. To be able to do this, you have to let go of control and go with the flow. Squash the "perfect" syndrome. You know what I am talking about: perfect project, meal, house, kids, dog, car, golf game, yard, etc.

Decide today what you can do tomorrow to make your life, and those around you less stressful and you will have a successful head start into gaining a healthier heart and a healthier life.