



The Healthy Heart

OVERVIEW

Your heart is the hardest working part of your body. The heart muscle never stops beating from when it first forms in the womb until the moment of death. Keeping your heart healthy involves a little effort but surely this is preferable to the consequences of heart disease: restricted activity, angina and coronary artery disease, heart failure or even potentially fatal heart attacks (myocardial infarction). Heart disease is basically a lifestyle disease. Your lifestyle includes your diet, exercise habits and whether or not you smoke.

The impact of smoking and lack of exercise on the heart are fairly well known today, but the importance of dietary factors is less well known, despite a vast literature on the subject. Biochemical and nutritional factors can stop or reverse the degeneration of the heart and circulatory system, even in smokers and 'couch potatoes'. **Of course, not smoking and taking some regular exercise are the most effective way of preventing heart problems from developing in the first place.**

Deficiencies of the nutrients listed below have been shown to have adverse effects on the hearts of otherwise healthy, non-smoking individuals. Sustained periods of high intake of these nutrients have been shown to have practical benefits in preventing heart disease.

- vitamin B complex
- vitamins C, D and E
- calcium, chromium, magnesium, potassium, selenium and zinc
- omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids
- a variety of co-enzymes and amino acids

Taking supplements of all of these may seem impractical, but simple improvements to your diet can provide many of them in a natural, easily absorbed state.

For recommended suppliers and supplement advice please contact Pauline. Telephone: 01905 798567
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DEFINITION

Angina: angina pectoris is a severe paroxysmal pain in the chest, characterised by feelings of suffocation and apprehension, caused by a temporary lack of sufficient blood flow to the heart, often in response to exercise.

Coronary artery disease: the major cause of angina - a blockage or restriction to blood flow in the blood vessels supplying the heart muscle itself.

Heart failure: a syndrome in which a cardiac disorder results in the heart being unable to provide an adequate supply of blood through the tissues of the body.

Heart attack: a heart attack or myocardial infarction is death of part of the heart tissue, caused by a sudden cessation of blood supply and hence oxygen to the tissue. Depending on the size of the area of tissue affected, this may be fatal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dietary changes

Organic produce has been shown to have higher food value than food produced using conventional farming methods. For a healthy heart, your basic diet should consist of the following:

- *Protein sources*
 - * Vegetable protein from soya, dried beans and peas, nuts and seeds, lentils and grains, especially rice, oats, millet, corn, spelt and quinoa.
 - * Oily fish in small servings e.g. mackerel, sardines, salmon, trout or other fish caught in cold water areas, eaten three times weekly.
 - * Low fat, preferably organic meat and eggs in small servings, infrequently.
 - * Low fat dairy products occasionally, but not milk.
- *Carbohydrate*
 - * 2 plates of vegetables daily, one cooked and one raw. Use garlic and onions liberally.
 - * Red peppers lower cholesterol significantly.
 - * Whole grains and beans.
 - * Fruit for breakfast and between meals.
- *Essential fats*
 - * These should come from nuts and seeds, especially walnuts, pumpkin, sesame, sunflower and flax seeds.
 - * Salad dressings made from extra virgin olive oil with lemon and garlic.
 - * Oily fish are also a good source of essential fats, such as Omega-3 and also the fat soluble vitamins
- *Extra fibre*
 - * Fibre from flax seeds or psyllium seeds.
 - * Sunflower seeds, lemons, apples and bananas (pectin foods).
 - * Oat bran or rice bran: 1 oz daily.
 - * All these fibre sources can be added to breakfast fruit or muesli.
- *Special foods*
 - * Kelp tablets and seaweeds.
 - * Spirulina powder for a potent blend of protein, vitamins and minerals
 - * Sprouted nuts and pulses, especially alfalfa.
 - * Lecithin granules
- *Drinks*
 - * Herbal tea, Fenugreek tea, ginger tea, grain coffee, mineral water or fresh-pressed vegetables, fruit juice.

Note that fat intake should be no more than 15% and 20% of total calorie intake. 1 gram of fat equals 9 calories.

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LIFESTYLE

Exercise is essential for a healthy heart. Brisk walking is one of the best forms of exercise there is. You should do more as your fitness gradually increases. Swimming and cycling are also very good forms of exercise. Everyone has their own safe level of aerobic exercise. The way to determine this is as follows: take the maximum rate of 220 deduct your age and then exercise to bring your pulse rate to 80% of this personalised figure e.g. if you are 40 the corrected figure is 180 you should exercise to a pulse rate no higher than 144.

If you are trying to lose weight, you should exercise three times a week for a minimum of 30 minutes.

Stress reduction and release are essential, as heart attacks and coronary artery disease are often directly attributed to stress. You should learn how to meditate, or practice some other relaxation technique. Breathing exercises can halve the chances of angina or heart attacks (see 'Deep Breathing' leaflet). Take frequent holidays and make time for fun in your life.

You also need to learn to deal with emotional problems in order to prevent insidious damage to the heart and blood vessels. Happiness equates with health and studies have shown that the effects of a poor diet can be overcome in a body, which is healthy in spirit. We should be self-healing organisms, but we can lose this ability if the cells of the body are receiving messages from an anxious or depressed mind.

HOMEOPATHY

Homeopathy can help restore balance to the body and is helpful in alleviating many of the symptoms of heart disease. Moreover treatment by a qualified homeopath can help with resolving emotional problems. Please phone Pauline to discuss this.

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