

# Keeping Your Heart Healthy



Heart disease is the leading cause of disease in the US so making your heart a top priority is a must. By focusing on seven simple behavioral changes you can work to lower your risks of heart disease and stroke, and improve your overall quality of life.

**Quit Smoking** – Smoking is one of the most preventable causes of premature death. It increases the risk of heart disease and when you stop smoking, you help lower your blood pressure and lower your LDL (bad) cholesterol.

**Avoid Second Hand Smoke** – We know that even being around smoke increases the risk for heart disease and sometimes even death. Avoid whenever possible.

**Know Your Numbers** – Keep tabs on your blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose and weight. Discuss these numbers with your doctor to make informed decisions and monitor your health properly.

**Process Out Processed Foods** – Try switching out at least one processed food for something you make yourself. By switching over from processed foods, which are usually high in sodium and artificial flavors, you can make a difference in your blood pressure and overall health.

**Get Moving** – It's easy to be sedentary, especially if you drive to work and sit all day at a computer. Small steps can make a big difference. Park further away from the office door, choose the stairs instead of the elevator, take a walk after lunch, or stand up every hour at your desk for a stretch. Try to get 20 to 30 minutes of moderate activity each day.

**Get Your Family and Friends on Board** – Lead by example. Most people are inclined to follow suit when they see their loved ones making healthy choices. There may be a little resistance but when those around you see you being healthy and active, they will most likely want the same thing for themselves. Be an encouragement to them!

**Spread Awareness** – It still comes to a surprise to many people to learn that heart disease is the number one cause of death. We can help inform our circles of family and friends about the risks and the actions a person can take to minimize those risks.

## Don't let stress get you down!

While keeping your cholesterol in check is always a good healthy rule to follow, don't overlook the role stress can play in heart disease.

Being chronically stressed raises the level of the hormone cortisol, a "stress hormone." While cortisol is important for our body's response to stress, it is equally as important that we relax so that our body's functions can return to normal following a stressful event.

Dr. Deepak Chopra, world-renown author, internal medicine specialist, and teacher of

meditation and wellbeing techniques, gives his top three tips for handling life's stresses.

1. Focus on one thing at a time. Feelings of stress emerge when you think of everything you need to do.
2. S.T.O.P. Stop what you're doing; Take a few deep breaths; Observe your body and smile; Proceed with kindness and compassion.
3. Take 20 minutes for yourself to sit quietly and do nothing.

Life doesn't need to be stressful, it's all in how you handle it!

## Know the Signs!

We already know that men are from Mars and women are from Venus. The same adage rings true when we look at the symptoms men and women experience during a heart attack.

Heart Attack Symptoms for Men:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the chest. It may last for more than a few minutes, or it can come and go.
- Pain in the arms, the neck, jaw, back or stomach
- Shortness of breath, lightheadedness, nausea, or sweating
- Abdominal discomfort that may feel like indigestion

Many women often experience these same symptoms, more often extreme fatigue, pressure in the chest and shortness of breath have been noted as more common symptoms for women.

Though we may come from different worlds, we have a lot in common when it comes to our mortality rate where the heart is concerned. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the U.S., killing 1 in every 4.

Don't let heart disease make you or your loved ones a statistic. Know the warning signs and how to protect yourself and those around you!