

FOCUS ON YOUR HEART

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We have spent our lives working to achieve a certain "lifestyle". Beneath the surface of their day to day responsibilities lurks the simple reality that some of their lifestyle choices may rob them of just what they have worked for.

Americans are typically unaware of their ability to control their own health. They can, in fact, do more for their good health than any physician.

A FOCUS ON HEART DISEASE

If you control your risks for heart disease, you'll also reduce your risk for certain cancers, adult onset diabetes and a host of other preventable illnesses.

THESE ARE THE FACTS

1. CHD (coronary heart disease) is America's number one health threat – it's the number one killer of Americans– period! That's men and women alike.
2. CHD is reversible which means it's preventable.

WHAT IS HEART DISEASE (CHD)

Most of the time when talking about CHD (heart disease), we're talking about atherosclerosis. This is a process where the arteries of your heart become blocked by a build-up of material called plaque which is made up of cholesterol (a by-product of the foods we eat). The chemicals in tobacco also make the artery walls "sticky", adding to the build up on your artery walls.

Heart Disease begins earlier than most of us realize. Casualties of both the Korean and Vietnam Wars were autopsied to evaluate cardiovascular build-up. Doctors found that, even though these war casualties were in the "prime" of lives, the majority of the American soldiers had significant blockage in their arteries. These were 18 to 25 year olds!

Among the millions who have Heart Disease (CHD), some experience chest pain, some chest pressure, others feel a pain in their left arm, neck or shoulder, while others become out of breath doing simple chores. These individuals have what are called *symptoms* and therefore

they are called *symptomatic!* If they pay attention to those warning signs – help is usually not far away.

Unfortunately, many individuals with CHD may never have warning signals (*symptoms*) and will have a major heart attack or sudden death as their first and only warning.

Even though you may feel fine today, there **will** come a time when you'll wish you had taken better care of yourself. At least, that's what **patients** say. Whether your goal is to live a long and enjoyable life or just long enough to be a nuisance to your kids -- good health, quality living and long lives are within the grasp of most of us.

Those who are not suffering from the symptoms of Heart Disease can identify their risks early by learning what their "risks" are. If you know what the risks are you have taken the first step to controlling them. The risks are simple and you should write them down. If you have: 1. A family history of Heart Disease - this means a direct blood relative who has had a heart attack before age 55. 2. a total cholesterol level of greater than 200 for the past few years. 3. an HDL cholesterol of less than 35. 4. blood pressure readings that are typically above 140/90. And, either poor eating habits and/or living a sedentary lifestyle, which both contribute to abnormal lab values. You don't have to be a victim. You can do something about your risks –it's your choice!

A FEW TIPS ON FIGHTING HEART DISEASE...

Scientists agree: Exercise may offer the most direct route to the Fountain of Youth. Exercise adds years and quality to life, enhances flexibility and endurance, builds strength, energy, balance and coordination -- it reduces stress and helps your body to fight disease.

"Walk your dog every day - whether you have a dog or not."

- Dr. Paul Dudley White

For cardiovascular fitness, The American College of Sports Medicine advises everyone to perform "a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity -- five or more days a week."

Moderate is 60% of your Maximum Predicted Heart Rate (MPR) and vigorous is 80%. MPR is determined by subtracting your age from the number 220. An example of moderate physical activity is a brisk walk where you swing your arms and walk like you're in a hurry.

When you exercise -- you're lighting your body's furnace. To maintain your present weight, you must burn the same amount of calories you consume each day -- to lose weight, you must burn more calories than you consume.

Many factors affect the rate at which your body burns calories — known as metabolic rate — the three greatest contributors are:

Body Size and Composition. The more muscle and less fat you have, the more energy you will use.

Activity Level. Physical activity burns calories and prolonged exercise even has a carry over effect. As you become fit, your body will burn calories for several hours “after” your exercise is over.

Age. Studies have shown that starting about age 30, metabolic rate starts to slow.

While Americans are dying of Cancer, Heart Disease and Stroke -- diseases of nutritional excess, many cultures around the world live long, productive and disease free lives. Their secret -- good nutrition!

Many of us already know that a predominantly plant based diet is considered to be the healthiest diet in the world. Plant-based diets have lots of fruits, vegetables, beans and grains. Plant foods reduce your chance for disease because they are low in fat and high in nutrients and fiber.

Diets consisting of mainly meats, cheese, eggs, sugary and processed foods increase your chances for heart disease and cancer because they are high in fat and low in nutrients and fiber.

Achieving health supporting eating habits can be accomplished in many ways. Snacking is one, but snacking on sweets (even low-fat ones) rob you of the nutrients that fruits and vegetables provide -- plus they tack on extra calories. Start thinking of snacks as apples, oranges, bananas, carrots, etc.

Try having “meatless” meals five or more times a week for starters. The more “plant-based” your diet becomes — the lower your cholesterol will become.

* Many who adopt a totally plant based diet will see their cholesterol drop 30%. Changes will vary from person to person. If you have changed to a total plant based diet but have seen NO change in your cholesterol, you may have identified a genetic or medical situation that affects your cholesterol and is independent of diet. Your doctor will evaluate this further and likely offer you cholesterol lowering drugs to reduce your risk.

Note: In societies where cholesterol averages are below 150, Heart Disease is relatively unknown as a health hazard.

NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

National agencies agree on the need for dietary improvement to protect us from Heart Disease and Cancer. The **Cancer Institute** recommends eating 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. The **National Institutes of Health** recommends eating at least 10 fruits and vegetables per day. The **American Heart Association** recommends eating 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

Societies that consume 40 grams of fiber each day have the lowest risk of cancer and heart disease anywhere on earth.

It's easy to avoid the preventable diseases. But, it's totally up to you. Good health should be the exception rather than the rule.