

HEART DISEASE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can high blood pressure contribute to heart disease?

High blood pressure makes the heart work harder. It accelerates the buildup of deposits in the arteries and makes the heart muscles thicker, which reduces the flow of blood and can eventually lead to heart failure.

How does body weight contribute to heart disease?

Increased Body Mass Index (BMI) contributes to metabolic irregularities which can cause diabetes and high blood pressure, leading to predisposition to coronary heart disease.

What should I include in my diet to keep my heart healthy?

One should eat plenty of green vegetables, fruits and moderate quantities of starchy foods (potatoes, rice, pasta). Olive oil is beneficial, as well as fat-free cheese, low fat yoghurt and milk (which help provide calcium). Choose fish and chicken over red meats, which should be avoided along with butter, cream, cakes or pastries and generally foods with a high number of calories.

How can Aspirin reduce the risk of heart disease?

The use of Aspirin is vital for patients who are predisposed to heart disease or already suffer from heart disease. 100mg daily will reduce the likelihood of clots forming within the arteries, thereby reducing the chances of a large heart attack.

What to do if you experience any of the warning signs of heart attack?

1. Immediately stop what you are doing and rest.
2. If you are with someone, tell them what you are experiencing.
3. If your symptoms are severe or last for 15 minutes, this is an emergency. Get help fast and call for an ambulance.

If you are with someone who may be having a heart attack, take charge and see that they follow the steps above. Stay with the person until the ambulance arrives.

What precautions should I be taking if I am a high-risk candidate for heart disease?

If any of the above-mentioned risk factors are present you should see a doctor, who will conduct a full cardiac assessment including a treadmill ECG test and, if necessary, a sonar of the heart as well as blood tests. Following this, you may require medication to control the risk factors. Further testing (such as an Angiogram) may be required in order that your doctor might exclude coronary disease.

What are the warning signs of heart attack?

The warning signs for heart attacks vary. The symptoms usually last for at least 10 minutes and you may experience more than one of the following symptoms:

- Pain or pressure around the chest: A heart attack usually causes severe compression discomfort or pain in the chest.
- The pain may come on suddenly, or sometimes starts gradually, developing over minutes. It may feel like tightness, pressure, heaviness, fullness or squeezing. The pain may be severe, moderate or even mild.
- The chest discomfort may spread to the neck and throat, jaw, shoulders, the back, either or both arms and even into the wrists and hands, or even the stomach.
- Discomfort in the upper body: Some people do not experience any chest pain, only discomfort in parts of the upper body. There may be a choking feeling in the throat. The arms may feel heavy.
- Other symptoms: These may include difficult breathing, nausea or vomiting, a cold sweat or a feeling of being dizzy or light-headed or of heart palpitations. Sometimes one can experience sudden fatigue and nausea during light physical exercise.

How can I prevent myself from developing heart disease?

If you are a smoker, stop smoking. Exercise regularly for 30 minutes, three to four times per week. Eat healthily and undergo annual checkups. This simple plan of action can improve heart health.



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