

## Evergreen Virtual Advisor

So how to keep your heart healthy? With so many heart diseases on the rise, most health-conscious people strive to seek the answer to this question. This article attempts to help you find the answer.

### Go Green

When we speak of heart, we cannot miss out on the importance and benefits of plant foods. Vegetables are an excellent source of glutamic acid. It is a class of amino acid which helps keeping blood pressure at lower levels; safe levels, so to say. What's more? Veggies lack cholesterol, fat and even calories, which otherwise tend to be the common culprits for causing heart diseases. Not to mention, the amount of vitamins and minerals that vegetables provide to the body do the most for health.

### Be Active

Without the aid of daily exercise, maintaining a good overall health is just more than a daunting task. Exercises not only improve heart function, but also help in bringing down blood pressure, and cholesterol levels in the body. A mere 30 minutes stroll daily does good for the heart, if not much. It is recommended that sprinting is more beneficial for the heart, than jogging.

### Reduce Oil

The next tip is about keeping oil from your diet. Although, you cannot avoid oil completely, you can keep its consumption to a small amount. Oils are a storehouse of calories and contain little nutrition. As they mostly comprise fat, they have all chances to lead to the development of plaque in the arteries thus, giving rise to some nasty heart problems. However, not all types of oil are unhealthy. Fish oil contains omega-3 fatty acids, which not only help in preventing cardiovascular diseases, but also reduce instances of heart attack. According to a study published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, a group of patients with cardiovascular disease had 30% less likelihood of heart attack because of omega-3 fatty acids. Best sources include salmon, mackerel and herring. Flaxseed, walnuts, and soybeans are also good sources.

### Cut the Smoke

If you think you cannot shun the habit of smoking, then you might as well know that you cannot do anything good for your heart. One of the most severe risks of smoking relates to heart diseases in almost every smoker. Quit smoking, and you have done half the job in keeping your heart healthy!

### Lose Weight

If your figure is slim, and belly flat, then you may have less things to worry about heart diseases. I am

talking about weight loss. Being overweight puts extra load on the heart thus, increases the risk of heart conditions. So, consume less sugary foods and more of fiber and complex carbohydrates, and fruits and vegetables. Maintaining a healthy weight is one of the basic necessities for a healthy heart today.

## **Add More Fiber**

Fiber exists in two major groups; soluble (dissolves in water) and insoluble (does not dissolve in water). Although both the types are beneficial to health, it is the former type that does way better to reduce cholesterol levels in the body. Due to its soluble nature, it binds with the cholesterol in the intestines thus, keep it from being absorbed. This keeps the level of LDL and total cholesterol down, while not affecting the HDL cholesterol level in any way. All a healthy person requires is a serving of 5 to 10 grams or more of soluble fiber in a day to avail this benefit of low cholesterol. Foods rich in this fiber include apples, peas, kidney beans, prunes, etc.

## **Beware of Saturated Fats**

It is important that you limit the amount of saturated and trans fats you consume from your food. These spike cholesterol levels in the body thus, increasing the risk of coronary artery disease. So avoid or limit consumption of food such as red meat, dairy products, coconut oil, palm oil. These are rich in saturated fatty acids. To avoid trans fats, eat less of fast foods, bakery products, snacks, crackers, and margarines. Go for foods rich in healthy fats such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats.

## **Eat Less Salt**

Sodium is good for the body, but in petty amounts. High salt intake means high blood pressure, which eventually points out to heart conditions. When sodium starts accumulating in the blood, it attracts water which in turn, increases the blood volume. Now to keep this blood circulating through the blood vessels, the heart has to work harder thus, causing high blood pressure. The recommended amount of sodium in the food per day must be less than 2300 milligrams.

## **Take the Right Medication**

In most cases, heart diseases are also related to the use of drugs. So, it is important that you take medicines as prescribed by the doctors, or get them altered if necessary.

## **Moderate Alcohol**

Drinking alcohol in moderate amounts does not harm the body. In fact, some studies show that moderate consumption provides some benefits for the heart. However, the habit of drinking is analogous to walking on thin ice. It is not difficult for any one to step out of his limit, and become a

heavy drinker. So, ensure that either you stick to moderate drinking or you don't drink at all.

## **Manage Stress**

Stress has also been known to be one of the common culprits of heart problems. Any stressful situation elevates blood pressure and this response takes its toll on the heart. So, keep yourself relaxed by practicing meditation, yoga, and other relaxation techniques.

To conclude, make a note of the above methods, and keep them handy in case you find it difficult to recall them. And now I would like to take your leave, as I have some sprinting to do! Take care!