

Change What You Can for a Healthy Heart

The best way to have a healthy heart is to reduce the risk factors that are *controllable*. Encourage a diet, exercise, and weight-loss program that works for the person.

Exercise A new study in JAMA finds that a *sedentary* lifestyle is worse for your health than smoking, diabetes and heart disease. Being unfit should be treated almost as a disease that has a *prescription*—called **exercise**.

Medication Fill prescriptions on time (to avoid running out) and be diligent that the person in your care takes medication *exactly* as directed.

Blood Pressure Monitor blood pressure on a daily basis if ordered by the doctor.

Cholesterol Cholesterol is a major factor in coronary artery disease. High cholesterol numbers may be reduced through appropriate diet, regular exercise, and weight loss and— cholesterol-lowering drugs.

Salt (Sodium) Consumption When an individual consumes too much sodium, extra fluid builds up in the body, which causes the heart to work harder.

Diabetes People with diabetes are more than *twice* as likely to develop heart failure as people without diabetes. Make sure that you and the person in your care are tested for diabetes.

Depression People with heart disease and their caregivers have depression at much higher rates than the general public. One important reason to treat depression is that it is associated with increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Smoking and Alcohol Abuse Cigarette smoking is a *major, preventable* risk factor for heart disease. The nicotine and carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke reduce the oxygen in a person’s blood, so smoking robs the heart of oxygen. Second-hand smoke is just as dangerous as first-hand smoke; therefore, ***if you or the person in your care smoke, get help to quit NOW!***

Alcohol Can damage the cells of the heart and make it harder for the heart to pump. Therefore, people with heart failure are advised to quit drinking alcohol.

Source: The Comfort of Home for Chronic Heart Failure

NOTE

Changing habits is not easy, but it is very important to follow through with the recommendations and treatment plan made by the health care team. These lifestyle changes and medications can decrease symptoms of the person in your care and the frequency of hospital stays. Complying with the doctors’ recommendation and treatment plan can improve the quality of life for the person in your care.

Taking Care of Yourself—Yoga and the Heart

Yoga’s combination of stretching, gentle activity, breathing, and mindfulness may have special benefits for people with cardiovascular disease.

Getting into the various postures during a yoga session gently exercises the muscles. Anything that works your muscles is good for your heart and blood vessels.

The deep-breathing exercises help slow the breathing rate. Taking fewer but deeper breaths each minute temporarily lowers blood pressure and calms the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for generating stress hormones.

Find a class with a qualified yoga instructor who can meet your health needs and limitations.

Snow Shoveling Danger

Snow shoveling puts heavy demands on the cardiovascular system and can raise heart rates to dangerous levels after only two minutes. Freezing temperatures that constrict blood vessels put more stress on the heart. Individuals over the age of 40 or who are relatively inactive should be particularly careful. If you feel tightness in the chest or dizziness, stop immediately.

Source: American Journal of Emergency Medicine

Live Life Laughing!

For children, is there any happiness which is not also noise?



Inspiration

If you haven’t any charity in your heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble.

~ Bob Hope

Memory Care

If the behavior of a person with Alzheimer’s changes suddenly or if a symptom appears that usually occurs much later in the illness, **THINK MEDICAL ILLNESS** and call the doctor.