

Natural Health for a Healthy Heart

Cardiovascular disease is on the rise. Heart disease, stroke, and related disorders kill more Americans than any other ailments combined. In 1990 approximately one million Americans died from cardiovascular disease. Arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) is the leading cause of heart attacks and strokes. Fat and cholesterol accumulate around the heart and inner walls of the arteries. This causes blood flow to slow and blood pressure to rise. Blood clotting is also a problem when the arteries are clogged which, if a clot breaks loose, can cause strokes or heart attacks according to where they end up. Heart disease is usually advanced before a problem arises. Prevention should be the first goal.

Heart disease is much less common in "primitive" societies. This is due in part to the lifestyle and diet choices of Americans. Diet is viewed as the most important factor in heart related disorders. An increased intake of sugar, refined flour and simple carbohydrates may also be contributing factors. Other risk factors include a family history of heart disease, cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, type A personality, stress, diabetes, obesity, high blood cholesterol levels, physical inactivity and coronary artery disease. Changes must be made in diet and life-style in order to prevent heart disease.

DIET

Following a diet low in animal fat and refined sugars but high in fiber is highly recommended. Whole grains, almonds, fresh fruits and vegetables, a variety of legumes, skinless turkey, chicken and fish should be the main dietary elements. Brown rice, garlic, onions, olive oil, raw fruits and vegetables, sprouts, asparagus, apples, bananas, beans, buckwheat, seeds, whey powder, and yogurt are especially good for the heart. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, red meat, refined carbohydrates, and white flour. Limit intake of dairy products which contain high amounts of fat. Homogenized dairy products contain an enzyme called xanthine oxidase which is believed to cause artery damage and could lead to arteriosclerosis. Use olive oil and canola oil when using fat. Avoid palm oil, coconut oil, peanut oil and cottonseed oil.

SUPPLEMENTS

Choline, inositol and lecithin: These act as fat emulsifiers in the bloodstream and can help prevent plaque buildup.

Chromium: Chromium is known for recent studies linking it to a reduced risk of heart disease. It may help prevent plaque buildup in the arteries. Low levels of chromium are thought to be a risk factor for developing heart disease. It also may help increase the beneficial HDL cholesterol and aid in lowering the LDL cholesterol

Coenzyme Q10: This can help oxygenate the heart muscle helping to prevent additional heart damage. Coenzyme Q10 can help the body break down fatty acids converting them to energy. This is often lacking in individuals with heart problems.

Essential Fatty Acids: These can help prevent hardening of the arteries by preventing the blood cells from clumping together and forming clots. They also help with the assimilation of fat soluble vitamins.

Germanium: Germanium has been found to lower high blood pressure and improve circulation in the body.

Calcium and Magnesium: Both of these minerals contribute to the muscular contraction and relaxation of the heart. They are essential for the proper function of the heart muscle and maintaining normal heart rhythm and blood pressure. Low levels of calcium have been linked to high blood pressure.

L-Carnitine: This is an amino acid that can help the heart by reducing fat levels in the blood.

Vitamin C with bioflavonoids: Vitamin C helps prevent blood clots and strengthens the capillary and blood vessel walls. It may help prevent high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis, lower cholesterol, repair arterial walls, and contribute to reversing heart disease.

Vitamin E: Vitamin E is well known for its beneficial effect on the heart.

Selenium: Low levels of selenium have been associated with heart disease.

HERBS

Hawthorn: This herb is great for cardiovascular health.

Garlic: Garlic is one of the most studied herbs for cardiovascular health. Several recent studies link garlic to lower incidence of cardiovascular disease.

Cayenne: This is also known as capsicum and is beneficial on circulation and cleaning and nourishing the blood vessels.

Ginkgo: Ginkgo relaxes the blood vessels and improves the flow of blood even in constricted arteries.

Rosemary Tea: This is a traditional heart tonic that helps to promote circulation and lower blood pressure.

Chinese Mushroom (auricularia polytricha): This is a natural blood thinner.

EXERCISE:

It is important to include exercise in the daily routine. Aerobic exercise is known to help improve the heart's pumping ability, reduce serum cholesterol levels, decrease the risk of heart disease, and reduce the risk of high blood pressure as well as many other ailments. Exercising an average of three to five days a week for thirty minutes will benefit the body. Actually any amount of exercise is beneficial for the body, so try and do something each day.

REDUCE STRESS:

Include relaxation techniques to reduce stress. Stress can increase the risk of heart disease. Stress releases adrenaline which causes the heart to work harder. If you feel resentment, fear or anger, find ways to deal with these in a positive way. Pursuit serenity and peace in life. Exercise, self hypnosis, biofeedback, meditation, yoga and prayer can all help develop inner peace.