



BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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Protect Your Heart

In honor of American Heart Month, the experts at **eni** once again bring you information on heart disease symptoms, risk factors, and preventative measures. Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States, making it so important to educate yourself on the disease.

Your heart is the hardest working muscle in your body. Its job is to constantly “pump” blood throughout your system providing the body with oxygen and nutrients. Heart disease is a generic term used for a variety of conditions that affect the proper functioning of your heart. Since your heart is essential to sustaining life, anything that prevents it from performing correctly should be taken very seriously.

Signs of a serious cardiac event, often called a heart attack, vary greatly from person to person. However, it is important to be able to recognize the general signs of a heart attack because the sooner you get help for a heart condition; the more likely you are to survive it. Common heart attack warning signs include: Chest pain or discomfort, pain in your arms, left shoulder, neck, jaw, back, or even stomach, shortness of breath, lightheadedness, fast or abnormal heartbeats, nausea, breaking out in cold sweat, and an extreme feeling of tiredness. If you experience one or more of these conditions and suspect that you might be having a heart attack it is important to get to the emergency room right away.

It is also important to remember that these

symptoms by themselves do not necessarily indicate a heart attack and can mimic symptoms of other conditions including gas, anxiety, the flu, etc. Always consult with your doctor for a proper diagnosis.

Although a heart attack is often a sudden occurrence, heart disease can progress over the course of many years. The American Heart Association has identified several risk factors that contribute to heart disease, some risk factors cannot be changed, but most can be altered. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chances are of developing heart disease.

Risk Factors that Can Not be Altered:

Increasing Age – Men over the age 45 and women over the age of 55 are at greater risk for coronary heart disease.

Sex (gender) – Before age 55, men are at a greater risk for heart attacks than women, but after that the risk begins to even out.

Heredity – Your risk of heart disease increases if your father or a brother was diagnosed before age 55, or if your mother or a sister was diagnosed before age 65 years of age.

Preventable/Manageable Risk Factors:

Obesity – Being significantly overweight puts you at risk for heart disease because carrying excess body fat, especially around the waist, increases the heart’s workload. In addition, obesity is often linked to other risk factors, such as high

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cholesterol, high triglyceride levels, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

A Sedentary Lifestyle – Physical inactivity increases the risk for heart disease. In fact, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute reports that inactive people are nearly twice as likely to develop heart disease. Exercise helps keep muscles strong and as the most important muscle in your body, your heart is no exception.

Smoking – Smoking greatly increases your heart disease risk as it contributes to plaque buildup in the arteries.

High Blood Pressure – This makes the heart work harder, which causes the heart to thicken and become stiffer, resulting in a greater potential for heart problems.

High Cholesterol – As your cholesterol rises, your heart disease risk climbs with it. Cholesterol can attach to the arteries and form a thick plaque that can block the heart from effectively delivering oxygen and nutrients to the body.

Diabetes – Too much sugar in the bloodstream can damage various parts of the body including the heart.

The good news is that you can significantly lower your risk for heart disease simply by leading a healthy lifestyle. You can protect your heart by adhering to the following healthy guidelines:

Quit Smoking – The positive benefits begin immediately after smoking your last cigarette and studies show that if you quit smoking, you cut your risk of heart attack in half within a year.

Eat Right – Eat a diet high in vitamins and antioxidants. Obtain your nutrients from a variety of food, focusing on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy products, lean meats such as chicken and fish, egg whites, and nuts. Limit eating food high in trans and saturated fat, cholesterol, sugar, and salt.

Be Active – In order to keep your heart strong, adults should aim for at least 15 minutes of physical activity each day that really gets your

heart pumping. Also, be sure to get up and move around for at least 10 minutes every hour.

Maintain a Healthy Weight – Check your body mass index (BMI) to make sure that it is within a normal healthy range. If your BMI is high, start eating healthier and make time to exercise in order to lower your weight, thereby reducing the strain on your heart.

Monitor Cholesterol – Keep your cholesterol levels low by limiting your intake of foods such as processed meat and fatty cuts of red meat, fried food, oils high in saturated fat, egg yolks, high fat dairy products, and donuts. There are several delicious foods that actually lower cholesterol, make these a regular part of your diet: avocados, salmon, walnuts, almonds, garlic, oatmeal, blueberries, grapes, broccoli, olive oil, and soy products.

Control Blood Pressure – High blood pressure is the most common risk factor for heart disease as the CDC reports that 67 million American adults suffer from it. If you do have high blood pressure, try to control it through a healthy diet low in salt and plenty of exercise. There are also safe and effective blood pressure medications that may be necessary if your condition cannot be controlled naturally.

Manage Diabetes – Make sure that you control your sugar. Follow the diet recommended by your doctor, test your sugar regularly, and take insulin or any other prescribed medications on time.

If you would like more information on heart disease prevention, remember that your Personal Assistant is available to provide information on heart healthy recipes, workout ideas, and much more!

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