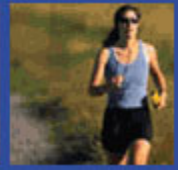


HeartFacts for Patients

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CARDIOVASCULAR CONSULTANTS



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Ten Tips for a Healthy Heart

Southern California Cardiovascular Consultants gives you the gift of 10 tips to keep your heart healthy. Some of these tips may even be a surprise. It seems there are a variety of lifestyle factors that influence your health.

1. Get a dog. Or get a cat, if you are so inclined. Numerous studies have made a direct correlation between pet ownership and improved health. What makes "Fido" and "Fluffy" the perfect tonic for an ailing heart? A 1999 study presented at the American Heart Association Sci-



entific Sessions looked at 48 male and female stockbrokers, who were taking medi-

cation to control high blood pressure. This study showed those with a pet nearby had a lower increase in blood pressure when under stress. In fact their blood pressure only rose half of what the non-pet owners experienced. "Pets seem to have a calming effect on their owners," says Dr. O'Connor.

A 1992 Australian study by the

Baker Medical Institute compared the cardiovascular disease risk factors of 5,741 people. Those who owned pets showed significantly lower blood pressure and triglyceride levels than those who did not own pets.

Other compelling statistics: People who own pets have a higher probability of surviving at least one year after being hospitalized for heart problems. Owning a dog increases the odds of surviving a heart attack—from 1-in-15 to 1-in-87. Pets may actually reduce the risk of a heart attack! "In addition," notes Dr. O'Connor, "owning a pet has been shown to decrease stress and depression, and improve overall health and well-being."

2. Have an A1c test for diabetes. Along with high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking, diabetes is considered a major risk factor for heart disease. A person with diabetes has three to four times the risk of a heart attack, compared with persons of the same age who don't have diabetes. At least 65 percent of persons with diabetes die from heart disease or stroke. More than 16 million Americans have type 2 diabetes, and those numbers are rising at an alarming rate. Persons with pre-



diabetes—elevated blood sugar levels not yet in the range of diabetes—also have an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. The higher the blood sugar levels are from the normal range, the higher the risk.

"People with type 2 diabetes have high rates of high blood pressure, lipid disorders and obesity," says Dr. O'Connor. "They also tend to have problems with sticky blood platelets, which cause clotting problems and poor blood flow. This makes them prime targets for heart disease. Atherosclerosis—hardening of the arteries—also occurs at an accelerated rate in persons with diabetes."

It is essential for people with diabetes to keep their disease in check by closely monitoring blood sugar levels. If you have diabetes, an A1c test is in order. This blood test measures how well blood sugar levels are being controlled over a two to three month period. This test should be

performed at least twice a year.

3. Check your cholesterol levels. High cholesterol is the main cause of atherosclerosis—cholesterol and fat deposits that narrow or clog coronary arteries. There is a direct link between high blood cholesterol and coronary heart disease. Lowering LDL (bad) cholesterol levels is shown to significantly reduce coronary heart disease.

Keep LDL cholesterol below 130mg/dl and HDL (good) cholesterol above 40 mg/dl. Total cholesterol levels should be less than 200 mg/dl. For those with heart disease, LDL should be below 100 mg/dl and HDL above 60 mg/dl. Cholesterol levels can be checked with a simple blood test. Make sure you not only have your total cholesterol tested, but your HDL and LDL levels tested as well.



4. Drink one glass of red wine a day. Does a glass of wine a day really keep the doctor away?

For years, anecdotal information has suggested red wine could

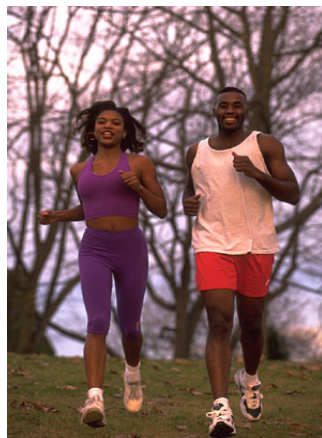
Ten Tips for a Healthy Heart (continued)

play a part in the prevention of heart disease. After all, the French, known for their rich, high-fat diet and red-wine consumption, have demonstrated a low incidence of coronary heart disease. Recent studies show this phenomenon may actually have scientific backing. Moderate amounts of alcohol have been shown to decrease the risk of heart disease.

These studies have found that alcohol has the ability to lower total cholesterol and raise HDL. Red wine in particular has shown promising benefits, possibly due to antioxidants found in the beverage.

"The key to wine consumption is moderation," says Dr. O'Connor. "This means one to two drinks per day, a glass of wine being four ounces. Excessive alcohol intake can be detrimental to your heart, and your health in general."

5. Take a brisk 30-minute walk at least five days a week. There is a clear-cut link between lack of physical activity and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Unfortunately, our society is becoming more and more



sedentary. Only 28 percent of American adults get the proper amount of exercise to keep their heart healthy. No need to spend lots of money on fancy equipment or gym memberships. A brisk 30-minute walk, five days a week can work wonders in giving your heart extra added protection. You can walk outside with friends, walk in the mall, or join a walking club.

6. Eat a low-fat, low-cholesterol, low simple carbohydrate diet.

Lowering your risk for heart disease includes adopting a diet that is low fat, low-cholesterol, and low simple carbohydrates. The American Heart Association recommends limiting foods with a high content of saturated fat and cholesterol. They also recommend limiting trans fatty acids, which are found in foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, such as packaged cookies and crackers.

Carbohydrates should come mostly in the form of complex carbohydrates. These include corn, rice, flour, potatoes, legumes, fruits and vegetables. Simple carbohydrates, foods containing refined sugar, should be kept to a minimum.

7. Sleep at least 7 hours per night. Getting too little sleep can do more than make you drowsy or grumpy. The consequences may be lethal. Short-term sleep deprivation has been found to raise blood pressure, increase stress, cause variations in heart rate, and raise insulin resistance, a condition that can lead to type 2 diabetes. These all add up to an increased risk of heart disease. It's important to get at least seven hours of sleep a night.

8. Always eat breakfast. Too many of us find it easy to skip breakfast, as we rush off to greet the busy day. But breakfast is the most important meal of the day. And, according to studies, bypassing breakfast may be detrimental to our health. In one such study, former UCLA Dean of Public Health, Dr. Lester Breslow, links eating breakfast with leading a longer and healthier life. Another study, recently cited at the American Heart Association's Annual Conference on Cardiovascular Disease Epidemiology and Prevention, found people who eat breakfast are far less likely to develop type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Rates of obesity and insulin resistance syndrome, a precursor to type 2 diabetes, were 35 to 50 percent lower among those who ate breakfast daily.

These conditions are major contributors to coronary heart disease. According to Dr. O'Connor, "Eating breakfast can help control hunger throughout the day, preventing snacking or overeating later on in the day. It allows us to make healthier food choices."

9. Never smoke, and if you do smoke, quit. Smokers have more than twice the risk for a heart attack as non-smokers. They are also 70 percent more likely to die if they suffer a heart attack. Combined with other risk factors, smoking dramatically increases the risk of heart disease. Quitting smoking can lower the risk of heart disease almost immediately. It's time to kick the habit!



10. Keep your blood pressure less than 130/80 mm Hg. High blood pressure (hypertension) is one of the most common risk factors for heart disease. It causes the heart to work harder and damages the arteries. Until recently, blood pressure under 140/90 mm Hg, was thought to be safe. Now, it is known that blood pressure level between 130/80 mm Hg and 140/90 mm Hg can increase the risk of heart disease. Those with blood pressure in this range are also more likely to become hypertensive at a later time.

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