Taking Healthy Habits to Heart
What You Should Know About Cardiovascular Disease and Tips for a Heart Healthy Life

According to the American Heart Association, heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States. Each year, about 620,000 people have their first heart attack. Dr. Corey Goldman, a Best Doctors Expert in Cardiology discusses below what you need to know about cardiovascular disease, classic and uncommon symptoms of heart disease, and tips for reducing your risk of heart disease.

If you would like to view the webinar on demand, please visit http://tinyurl.com/BestDoctorsHeartHealth

What are your top 5 tips for how someone can live a heart healthy life?

**Physical Exercise**
Whether it’s engaging in cardiovascular exercises like jogging or weight training, starting and committing to a consistent exercise routine will greatly improve cardiovascular health. Doing 10 minutes, 3 times a week is a good place to start and will allow for some momentum.

**A Balanced Diet**
The most important thing is to understand that a low-fat or fat-free diet does not necessarily constitute a heart healthy diet. It’s critical to not just go on a diet, but add balance by modifying what you eat. The Mediterranean Diet, initially identified in Greece, Southern Italy and Spain, involves adding foods such as beans, unrefined cereals, fruits, nuts, vegetables, fish, sea food, yogurt, 1-2 cups of wine, oils (Olive oil, canola oil), and a small amount of lean meat or meat products. This is associated with an increased longevity (living longer without heart attack).

To learn more about the Mediterranean Diet, please visit the links below:
http://www.drgourmet.com/mediterraneandiet/
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediterranean_diet

**Weight Loss**
Losing weight will improve sleep, exercise capacity and metabolism which have a direct impact on heart health improvements. People who live with a lean body weight live longer. Achieving an ideal body weight with the Mediterranean Diet, increased water intake and exercise is what’s needed to get that body weight down and maintain it.

**Optimal Amount of Sleep**
People who sleep the recommended 6 ½ to 7 ½ hours per night have been proven to live longer and do well in their everyday life. Getting this optimal rest improves heart health.

**Active Relaxation**
Active Relaxation includes meditation, yoga, guided imagery, self-hypnosis, a 10 minute walk around the block not thinking about life’s problems. It allows hormones and your heart rate to come down and increases the lengths of your telomeres, promoting longevity. Spending between 5 minutes and 20 minutes a day is beneficial in promoting cardiovascular health.
What are some uncommon symptoms people may not know about that could indicate they have heart disease?

Classic signs of a heart attack including feeling pressure in the mid-chest area or the sensation of having an elephant standing on your chest deserve rapid, immediate attention. Some uncommon symptoms that could indicate heart disease include:

- **Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing**
  Adult onset of asthma is fairly uncommon. For someone who has not smoked for long periods of time to get diagnosed with COPD raises a red flag. Coughing indicates there’s congestion in the lungs and is a sign of a problem with the heart pumping.

- **Sweating and nausea**
  If you’re walking and experience mild sweating that escalates to profuse sweating and nausea that doesn’t improve when you stop indicates a potential sign that the bottom portion of the heart may not be getting adequate amounts of blood.

- **Leg swelling**
  Unexplainable leg swelling is often a sign of congestive heart failure

- **Abdominal pain**
  Abdominal pain can also be a sign of congestive heart failure. When your heart pumping is inadequate, the blood doesn’t clear out of the veins in the liver properly, which causes the liver to begin swelling and leads to abdominal pain.

- **Constant Fatigue**
  Some people will feel they don’t have the energy they used to. In some cases, this is a sign that there is inadequate heart pumping or that they may have Congestive Heart Failure.

For a 55-year-old patient looking to start exercising again, should s/he get a stress test done beforehand?

For someone with diabetes who doesn’t have the sensory system in their chest around their heart functioning at an optimal level, they should see a cardiologist and undergo an exercise or chemical stress test prior to initiating an exercise program to assess exercise capacity and look for any heart disease warning signs.

For those who don’t have diabetes and have a reasonably active lifestyle (walk up flight of stairs without shortness of breath, walk to car without stopping, etc.), it’s reasonable to consider initiating an exercise program without a formal stress test.

Would hobbies such as doing yard work or painting be considered a part of active relaxation?

Yes. Hobbies represent an area where people experience less stress and can improve their cardiovascular health. For example, if you compare working 8 hours with no time for hobbies and working 8 hours a day with a hobby, those who have hobbies will have better cardiovascular health outcomes.

Do men have different symptoms as a group than women do when it comes to heart symptomatology?

Men who have a heart attack will more likely describe classic chest pain and chest pressure as their initial symptom that led them to the emergency room. Women will describe more atypical symptoms such as nausea, fatigue, right sided chest pain or sweating as being the initial presentation of symptoms.

Women sometimes will describe very non-specific things like “not feeling right” or “don’t have the energy or desire to eat” which can be a warning symptom for a woman for heart disease. Please note that both men and women can display non-classic signs of chest pain as an initial sign for heart disease.
If someone decides to start exercising, should they get a heart rate monitor and how should they use it?

This varies depending on the person and should be dealt with on an individual basis. A heart rate monitor is very useful in determining a person's ability to exercise safely. Depending on whether your goal is to achieve weight loss or improve your cardiovascular health, use a target heart rate chart that is based on age and start out your exercise routine at 65% - 70% of your projected targeted heart rate for 20 minutes. This is a reasonable place to start. Even more important than specifically targeting a heart rate is to actually go out and be active.

Would cardiac calcium scoring or a heart x-ray be a worthwhile test for people to get?

Yes. Doctors are always looking for predictors or surrogate markers (High blood pressure, age, cholesterol, age, gender, etc.) of heart disease and both the cardiac calcium scoring and heart x-ray tests will help to assess overall risk of heart disease. These tests allow doctors to predict any increased risk of having a heart problem in the future.

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For more information about Heart Health, please visit The American Heart Association website at www.heart.org.

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