

STRESS & HEART DISEASE

What's the Connection?

EXPERT ADVICE

Understanding Risk Factors

“Heart disease is the #1 killer of women in America. The traditional risk factors for heart disease are: high cholesterol, high blood pressure and obesity. Other factors such as stress play an important role in the development of heart disease in women. Chronic stress exposes the body to elevated levels of the stress hormones. Stress may aggravate inflammation in the coronary arteries and can trigger a heart attack. Exercise, avoidance of smoking, relaxation, a healthy diet and weight control are some ways to deal with alleviating stress.”



Santhi Adigopula, M.D., MRCP, Hamilton Cardiology Associates



While the link between stress and heart disease isn't entirely clear, researchers do know one thing: stress negatively affects the body. Our bodies react to stress by releasing adrenaline and cortisol into the bloodstream, which causes blood pressure to spike temporarily. These episodes can cause damage to artery walls.

In a world where there are dozens of time-sensitive things to do each day, more people than ever before are living in a constant state of stress. In addition, the way we choose to deal with stress can be a major factor in our risk for heart disease. From smoking and drinking to overeating, poor lifestyle choices can raise the risk for heart attack, stroke and high blood pressure.

Whether or not you have been diagnosed with heart disease, reducing stress can help enhance quality of life. It can improve health and help with managing challenging situations. Here are some tips for reducing stress:

KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS. Set priorities and then cut the to-do list. Decide what must be done and delegate if possible.

DROP BAD HABITS. Cut back on alcohol and caffeine and quit smoking. All of these things raise

blood pressure and can even elevate stress.

SWEAT IT OUT. Working out releases endorphins, which can relieve tension and also lower your risk for depression. Just 30 minutes of an elevated heart rate (during exercise) each day can reduce your risk for heart disease.

AVOID AND ACCEPT. Stay away from things you know trigger stress and learn to accept the things you can't control.

TAKE CUES FROM DEEPAK CHOPRA. World-renown author, meditation expert and internal medicine specialist Dr. Deepak Chopra suggests many ways to handle stress. Here are his top 3 tips:

- **Focus on one thing at a time.** Our conscious mind cannot do more than one thing at once. Divide your day and focus on one task at a time.
- **S.T.O.P.** Stop what you are doing, Take a few deep breaths, Observe your body and smile, Proceed with kindness and compassion.
- **Take 20 minutes for yourself.** Sit quietly without thinking about a to-do list for a short time each day. Focus on breathing deeply and relaxing. ♥

Your health is our mission.

We all have unique talents and skills. Some are drawn to accounting or manufacturing. Others are called to be teachers or police officers.

At Hamilton Cardiology Associates, our strengths, interests, and passions guide us to our mission...your heart health.



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