



Preventing Heart Disease

Natural ways to keep your heart healthy

The heart is a great example of all the ways our bodies work tirelessly for us, functioning 24 hours a day, 365 days a year without rest or vacation. In return for its efforts, all the heart really asks for is a little respect. Unfortunately, most of us prefer to take its work for granted. In the U.S., cardiovascular disease is responsible for the most deaths and the largest number of hospitalizations each year.

Fatty buildup in the arteries, leading to their hardening, is the primary cause of cardiac problems. This has been blamed on cholesterol, but research is now showing that inflammation is the underlying cause of this plaque buildup. Cholesterol levels are not very good predictors of heart attack risk, either.

In recent years, it has been discovered that another chemical called homocysteine is a better indicator of heart attack risk. A by-product of amino acid metabolism, homocysteine is necessary in small quantities, but in larger quantities creates free radicals which damage artery walls, causing scar tissue and eventually creating blockages. In most cases, these elevated levels seem to be caused by a lack of folic acid and vitamins B6 and B12.

Another pair of culprits in cardiovascular disease are elevated levels of glucose in the blood and high insulin levels. Excess glucose in the blood tends to bind with proteins to create a very sticky substance which accumulates on vessels walls in much the same way we've been told that cholesterol does—creating much the same kind of damage. And when glucose levels rise, they also trigger high levels of insulin, the chemical needed by cells to process that glucose. High levels of insulin can cause damage to the blood vessels by contributing to inflammation.

Elevated levels of homocysteine, blood sugar and insulin also set the cardiovascular system up for more damage from free radicals, a downward spiral in which the oxidative damage leads to more loss of function. This process is accelerated by various negative lifestyle factors, from smoking to poor eating and exercise habits to high levels of stress.

That's the bad news. The good news is that there is a lot we can do to reverse these processes to strengthen and protect our hearts. Some of the most powerful steps are simple. Stop smoking. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables because they contain antioxidants which reduce inflammation and free radical damage. Start to exercise at least a few times a week.

Eating the right kind of fats is important for preventing coronary heart disease. Omega-3 essential fatty acids help reduce inflammation and cardiovascular disease. Super Omega-3 EPA is an excellent supplement for helping to prevent cardiovascular disease. Flaxseed oil contains a proper ratio of omega-6 and

omega-3 essential fatty acids and is a good supplement to take to satisfy the body's needs for essential fatty acids. Lecithin is one of the good fats. It helps oil and water mix and thereby liquefies cholesterol and dissolves plaque.

Fiber is very important for cardiovascular health. It helps eliminate excess cholesterol and toxins, and slows the absorption of sugar to lessen the problem of hyperinsulinemia. Studies show that for every 10 grams of fiber you add to the diet, you lower your risk of dying from heart disease by 17%. Nature's Three or LOCLO are good choices for fiber supplementation.

There are specific supplements that can be taken on a regular basis to improve cardiac health. These include hawthorn berries, which tonify the heart and cardiovascular system, and cayenne or capsicum, which stimulates circulation throughout the body. Another important cardiac herb is garlic, which helps to lower blood pressure, reduce arterial plaque, eliminate excess cholesterol and prevent blood clots from forming in the arteries. All of these herbs are found in HS II.

Ginkgo enhances circulation to the brain and benefits the peripheral circulation through its antioxidant properties. Ginkgo and Hawthorn provides the benefits of both of these herbs. Butcher's broom has been shown to lower cholesterol levels and prevent blood clots.

CoQ10 is an enzyme found in all body cells and the heart has the most of these enzymes. Scientific studies have shown that people who have suffered a heart attack or who have high blood pressure greatly improve by taking CoQ10.

Magnesium is a very essential mineral for cardiac health. It regulates the heartbeat and lowers high blood pressure. This mineral prevents strokes by reducing platelet adhesiveness by about 40%. It also helps to absorb plaque. It can be used (like beta-blockers) to prevent the heart from having spasms.

Cardio-Assurance combines the benefits of many of the heart protecting herbs and nutrients listed above into one product.

With a little thought and effort, one can reduce the risk of heart disease. For additional information on preventing heart disease using herbs and natural remedies, consult your local herb specialist or one of the sources listed below.

Additional Resources

- The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products* by Tree of Light Publishing
- Cholesterol: Facts versus Myth (Video)* featuring Kimberly Balas and Steven Horne
- Cholesterol and Your Health* by Kimberly Balas and Steven Horne
- The Green Pharmacy* by James A. Duke

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Seek appropriate professional assistance for all serious health problems. Handout prepared by Tree of Light Publishing
P.O. Box 911239, St. George, UT 84791 (www.treelite.com)
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