

# *How to Prevent a Heart Attack*

March 21, 2018 / Maryland Cardiology Associates / Therapy



***Ever heard of the expression “young and bulletproof”? As young people, we once believed that we were invincible, that no matter what we did to our bodies or what we put inside them, we would bounce back stronger than ever and in record time to do it all over again.***

That delusion of immortality quickly fades away when you or someone you know unexpectedly has a heart attack.

When they occur, heart attacks immediately set a timeclock on your life in motion. Suddenly, your perception changes and you wonder if every passing second will be your last. You see each moment as a precious gift, holding onto them as priceless treasures. Some victims are able to recover quickly, while others find themselves changing their whole lives, facing a long road of pain, stress management and regular doctor visits.

No one on earth goes through life without knowing someone who has suffered a heart attack. It's one of the most frightening experiences with no clear, obvious warning signs to alert you.

But with dedication and discipline, you can prevent the fate of a heart attack. Here are steps you can take.

## *Eat Right*

A healthy diet can be your most powerful weapon against heart attacks. Nutritious foods rich with vitamins, minerals and fiber, but low in calories, can affect controllable risk factors like cholesterol and high blood pressure, and can even trim down your waistline. Cut down on, or completely get rid of salt, saturated fats, sweets, and red meats and build a diet that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes and whole grains.

Including low-fat dairy products, poultry and fish can be helpful as well. Also, be sure to monitor your sugar intake, as too much sugar in the blood can damage your arteries.

### *Be Active & Manage a Healthy Weight*

Staying physically active goes hand in hand with a healthy diet. Obesity places you at risk for high cholesterol and high blood pressure, which heighten your risk for heart disease. Coordinate your diet with your physical activity level so you are using up as many calories as you take in and maintain a healthy weight.

### *Stop Smoking*

Risk of heart disease is dramatically reduced for those who quit smoking. Worse, smoking lowers your HDL cholesterol level, which helps prevent arteries from becoming blocked. When a person with high cholesterol smokes, their risk of coronary heart disease increases even more. It's tough to quit but recovering from a heart attack or stroke, or living with chronic heart disease is even tougher.

### *Control Your Drinking*

In addition to seriously impeding your judgment and ability to drive, excessive alcohol consumption can raise blood pressure, cause obesity and increase your risk for developing an irregular heartbeat, a stroke, cancer, alcoholism and other diseases.

However, that doesn't mean you need to avoid alcohol altogether. Moderate consumption can have a beneficial, protective effect. It is recommended to limit yourself to 1-2 standard drinks a day at most.

### *Take It Easy*

You've probably heard of people who suffer heart attacks during times of heightened emotional stress: at the workplace, after a great tragedy, during a moment of great intimacy. Stress is known to affect risk factors of heart disease and stroke. When stressed, a person may overeat (nothing healthy), start smoking or smoke more than they otherwise would. Manage your stress and dedicate time to relax and enjoy life.