Sagicor

5 Ways to Maintain a Healthy Heart

BY Shane Bennett Posted September 29, 2020

The most powerful engine known to mankind is only the size of your fist weighing anywhere from seven to fifteen ounces. If you guessed the heart, you're correct. It comes as no surprise that this juggernaut muscle goes through a lot – try 2,000 gallons of blood daily – and can continue to beat even if removed from the body. We're sure you want to keep yours inside your body, so we've prepared five ways to keep your heart healthy and strong.

1) Eat up

Here's the fact: What we eat affects our heart.

a. One Caribbean survey found that Cardio-vascular diseases are rooted in nutritional patterns. It also found that diets which include large proportions of calories from animal products have saturated fatty acids and cholesterol in levels which raise serum lipids (any major fatty acid found in the total blood) above the 'evolutionarily normal' range.

b. It also stated that excess sodium and low intake of fruits, vitamins and other specific micronutrients, contribute greatly to the development of hypertension. Our advice? Less meat, more fruits and vegetables.

2) Cool Down

Ever heard the saying "laughter is the best medicine", well, it's not far from the truth.

Here's what we know: Stress does far worse damage than you can think. We manage that by releasing the stress and encouraging laughter. Here's why:

a. Laughter is scientifically proven to boost your immune system, which means you're less likely to get sick or develop infections if you're happy. If you do get sick, your body responds more quickly based on the higher level of illness-fighting cells present.

b. During laugher your heart races, forcing you to take deeper breaths which creates more oxygen to visit your cells thus improving their function; ensure you laugh BIG.

c. As you laugh big, your heart says "Hey guys, send down some endorphins!", these 'feel good' hormones, once released, counteract stress hormones and lower your blood pressure which improves your mood, eases anxiety and removes your heart's tension.

d. When you heart is relaxed, less cortisol aka "stress hormone", is released, promoting weight loss when paired with regular diet and exercise of course. Our advice? Laugh it up.

3) Drop sweat

We know the obvious benefits of exercising: better blood circulation, reduced weight, and more but get this, cardiovascular exercise – such as running – encourages blood vessels in the heart to open faster. After a while, this trains the heart to become more efficient, requiring less movement to do a better job. It's found that athletes have the largest and strongest heart muscles based on their constant training. If their hearts can manage a 100m dash, imagine what you can do when you start training today.

4) Talk It Out

It may not seem like much but talking about issues improves your heart's health.

Here are some facts:

a. It's generally found that heart attacks are more prone to happen on Monday mornings given the increased stress of heading back to work. If this sounds like you, it's time to talk.

b. More people die from a broken heart than you know. Unresolved issues from loss of a loved one, pain and sadness from trauma or worry, that if not properly checked, can be a heart stopper – literally. It can cause what is known as an arrhythmia or a problem with the rate or rhythm of your heartbeat. If this is not checked for a prolonged period, it can result in heart failure.

5) Sleep On it

Sleep is key for a healthy heart.

If you don't sleep enough, chances are you're at a higher risk for cardiovascular disease and coronary heart disease. While the science is not clear on this as to why less sleep raises those negative chances, research has shown that too little sleep causes disruptions in the body's natural flow. Maintenance processes such as blood pressure regulation, managing inflammation and more are thrown off balance if you sleep too little, and also if you sleep too much. Our advice? Time to set those alarm clocks.

There you have it – five tips for better heart health. Just a quick recap:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables and less meat.
- Laugh heartily with deep belly laughs.
- Exercise more; start with walking.
- Talk about all your challenges
- Sleep well on a regular basis.

Use these tips and we're sure your heart will thank you for it. Until next time, be safe and stay healthy!