



## 11 facts about cardiovascular health you need to know

If you're like most people, you probably don't think about your cardiovascular health very often. But if you want to live a long, healthy life, it's important to understand the basics of cardiovascular health and take steps to protect your heart.

This February is National Heart Month, an opportunity to focus on our cardiovascular health and how to prevent heart disease, a serious condition affecting millions of people worldwide each year.

Understanding the risk factors associated with heart disease can help you take steps to protect your heart health and lower your risk of developing heart problems in the future.



Here are 11 facts about cardiovascular health that everyone should know:

1



The benefits of exercise are well known. It can help protect your ticker, improve its efficiency and reduce the risk of heart disease. There will be significant benefit to your heart health with as little as 15 mins exercise per day. You should exercise so that you are slightly breathless. Aim for a minimum of 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity activity.

2



The heart is a powerful muscle that requires care and maintenance. To keep your cardiovascular system running smoothly, you should consume plenty of fruits, including oranges or grapefruit; and vegetables, including leafy greens such as spinach. Eat plenty of whole grains, including rich brown rice and quinoa as well as healthy fats from olive oil and avocado.

3



Uncontrolled high blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease. It increases your chance of having a heart attack or developing a stroke. Both can lead to permanent disability and even death. Keeping your blood pressure within the healthy range will protect your cardiovascular health in the long run, so don't let this go unchecked. A home machine is helpful to some patients.



4



The best thing you can do for your cardiovascular health is to quit smoking. Quitting will improve your quality of life and reduce your risk of cardiovascular diseases or emphysema. One year after stopping smoking your risk of heart disease is half that of a smoker.

5



Cholesterol is a fat found in our bodies. It helps make cell walls, hormones and vitamin D, among other things. When cholesterol levels become too high, it can lead to heart disease or strokes, so we need you to check yours regularly, at least once per year. Family history is the most significant factor. If there is a family history of high cholesterol you should arrange a blood test with your GP.

6



Diabetes is a complex condition that can seriously affect your heart. Diabetes is one of the leading causes of heart disease and can lead to many other serious health problems. If you have diabetes, ensure your blood sugar levels are controlled and follow the doctor's advice closely for the best results.

7



Studies have shown that stress can affect your heart negatively, so it's important to find healthy methods to manage the symptoms. The body has many ways of dealing with stress, but the most effective is through relaxation. Yoga and meditation are great examples that can help you relax your mind.

8



You might be surprised to learn that too much salt can be dangerous for your heart. Too many people have high blood pressure or heart disease because they eat a lot of processed foods, often seasoned with sodium for flavourings. Still, this excessive intake does more harm than good in the long run, so try limiting your daily consumption to less than 2,300 mg per day.



9



Drinking too much alcohol is bad for your heart. It can also raise blood pressure and increase the risk of a stroke or other complications, so it's important to only drink in moderation. According to the NHS, men and women are advised not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis, equivalent to six pints of average-strength beer or 10 small glasses of lower-strength wine.

10



Genetics plays an important role in heart health. If there is a history of heart disease, particularly at a young age in your family let your GP know so that any relevant screening for risk factors can be carried out.

11



The best way to optimise your heart health is to keep on top of any modifiable risk factors – avoid smoking, take regular exercise, maintain a normal weight, drink in moderation and become familiar with your family history as well as your blood cholesterol and sugar levels.

By understanding these facts about heart health, you'll be better equipped to make smart decisions for your heart and overall health. Don't hesitate to talk to your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about heart health. Our experts are here to help. Contact your HealthHero or Validium service if you need support.