

Fantastic **40**

**40 THINGS
DOCTORS DO
TO PROTECT
THEIR HEARTS**

Do you know?

Every **1 out of 4** death is due to Heart Disease.



It can be prevented with a heart-healthy lifestyle.

Here's how heart healers beat the odds in their own lives.



According to World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics, heart diseases are the leading cause of death globally, **taking an estimated 17.9 million lives each year. India accounts for 1/5th of these deaths worldwide, particularly in the younger population.**¹

Many aspects of our lifestyle affect heart health. The most important modifiable risk factors for heart disease are unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use and over consumption of alcohol. The effects of these risk factors may show up in individuals as raised blood pressure, raised blood glucose level as well as high cholesterol level and obesity. By living a healthy lifestyle, one can keep the blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels normal and lower the risk for heart disease and heart attack.²

Find out why a healthy lifestyle is so important and know 40 things doctors do to protect their hearts.^{3,4}



HEALTHY DIET



A heart-healthy diet can help protect your heart and keep it from developing heart disease. It focuses on various types of food over the course of days, weeks, and months. A diet rich in whole grains, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats that is naturally low in unhealthy fats, salt, and added sugar is ideal.

1 EAT MORE **FRUITS** AND **VEGETABLES**



A diet full of varieties of fruits and vegetables is linked to healthier hearts and a lower risk of heart disease.

2 SWAP TO **WHOLE GRAINS**



Whole grains cereals include more natural grain. This means they have more nutrients like dietary fiber, B vitamins, vitamin E, and healthy fats.

3 CHOOSE HEALTHY FATS



The best fats to include in your diet are monounsaturated and polyunsaturated (omega-3 and omega-6) fats. You can find these healthier fats in avocados, nuts, fish and sunflower seeds.

4 USE HERBS AND SPICES



Use spices and herbs instead of salt while cooking. This can help to lower blood pressure by reducing the sodium intake in the diet. It can also add flavours to the food while reducing added sugars and saturated fats.

5 LIMIT THE SALT CONTENT IN REGULAR DIET



Too much salt in the regular diet leads to high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. Salt consumption can be reduced by not adding salt during the preparation of food, not having a salt shaker on the table, limiting the consumption of salty snacks and choosing a product with less salt content.

6 CHOOSE COOKING OILS CAREFULLY



There has been extensive research on the effects of oils on heart health. Different sources of oils, their proportion and types of fatty acids can significantly influence health. Therefore, it is suggested to avoid the use of products with palm oil. Instead, choose canola oil, coconut oil, and olive oil which are beneficial for the heart.

7

TRY A VEGETARIAN DIET



The results of a specialized program developed for cardiac patients showed that a vegetarian diet followed for 3 months may lead to several benefits on heart health as well as cause less bloating and tiredness after meals.

8

CONSUME LOTS OF PROTEIN



Like a muscle, the heart also requires lean proteins daily. It is recommended to eat grass-fed meat and wild-caught fish, as well as heart-healthy olive oil, nuts, and vegetables. Avoid eating antibiotic or hormone treated meat.

9

EAT EGGS



Eggs are an efficient and rich source of protein, vitamins and other nutrients including vitamin D and choline. Eggs are naturally high in cholesterol but the cholesterol in eggs doesn't seem to raise cholesterol levels the way other cholesterol-containing foods do, such as trans fats and saturated fats. Egg whites provide plenty of protein without the cholesterol of the yolk.

10

FOLLOW A MEDITERRANEAN DIET



Mediterranean diet is a healthy-eating plan which is high in vegetables, fruits, fish oils and whole grains cereals. Instead of grabbing crisps, try to drizzle on mustard oil, soybean oil and olive oil. This quick snack is part of a mediterranean diet that has been proven to be healthier for the heart.

11 FOLLOW NO-WHITE DIET

Removing white food such as white sugar, white flour, white bread and white rice from the diet helps to restore the blood sugar balance and promote weight loss.



12 EAT DARK CHOCOLATE

As per the 2016 study, eating dark chocolate daily can help prevent diabetes.⁵ It may improve arterial elasticity and aid in blood pressure reduction. Keep an eye out for cocoa that is at least 75% and enjoy a square or two.



13 DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

Dehydration causes an increase in hematocrit (the ratio of red blood cells to blood volume) and blood thickness, both of which have been linked to heart disease events. Keeping the body hydrated helps the heart more easily pump blood all over the



body.⁶ According to the latest research, staying well hydrated throughout life could reduce the risk of developing heart failure.⁷

14 GET PLENTY OF VITAMIN D

Low vitamin D levels are a significant predictor of cardiac death, heart attack, and stroke in studies. High blood pressure and high blood



sugar, both of which are risk factors for heart disease, are linked to low vitamin D levels. It is necessary to check the vitamin D levels and, if needed, supplement with high doses to bring them up to normal.

15 SKIP THE FOOD CONTAINING RED MEAT



According to a Harvard University study, processed red meat consumption has been linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.⁸ Thus, it is needed to limit the intake of processed meat to lower the risk of heart disease.

16 EAT DAIRY FOOD INSTEAD OF TAKING CALCIUM SUPPLEMENTS



A recently conducted study found that taking calcium in the form of supplements may raise the risk of plaque build-up in the arteries.⁹

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Regular physical activity is one of the most beneficial things one can do for heart health. Being physically active includes everyday activities like walking and exercise which helps to control risk factors including high blood pressure and cholesterol. Increased physical activity can help you manage your weight and being a healthy weight also reduces the risk factor for heart disease. In addition, regular exercise can help your bones and muscles become stronger.



17 DO CYCLING



Cycling is a good way to improve fitness and heart health. Two short trips to the shops and back each day – about 30 minutes of daily cycling – will begin to benefit your cardiovascular system. It also strengthens the heart muscles, arms, legs and other body muscles.

18 TRY TO GET THE STAIRS



At present, the number of heart attacks has increased greatly; as modern conveniences like lifts and escalators significantly reduce the number of exercise people gets daily. As a result, it is recommended to take the stairs whenever possible.

19 SPEND MORE TIME OUTDOORS



Being outdoor has been revealed to lower stress, blood pressure, and heart rate, as well as increase mood and improve overall mental health. Currently, walking, running, or moderate physical activity is increasingly recommended by doctors to improve health.

20 HAVE AN INTENSE AEROBICS



Frequent, intense, long-duration cardiovascular exercise lowers blood pressure, raises good cholesterol (HDL), lowers bad cholesterol (LDL), and also stabilises blood sugar. For individuals with age 18-64 years, it is recommended to have a weekly 75 to 150 minutes session of intense aerobics.¹⁰

21 **PERFORM DANCE**

The benefits of dance are many as it helps maintain overall health. Dancing can help strengthen the heart and help with blood circulation. Dance has a way of lowering stress and improving mood as well as increasing muscular strength, endurance and motor fitness.



22 **LOSE THE EXCESSIVE WEIGHT**

Weight loss, even few grams of body weight provides several benefits like it improves metabolic function, reduces high blood pressure as well as levels of bad cholesterol and triglycerides. It improves functioning of heart and reduces the risk of heart disease.



23 **TRY TO EXERCISE REGULARLY**



Many people are simply unmotivated to start an exercise routine. The most common reason people do not exercise is that they do not have enough time. The exercise must be scheduled regularly. It is advised to set short-term, attainable goals for yourself so that you can see results and success quickly, and to find workouts that fit your interests and lifestyle.

25 **PERFORM SPORTS**

Childhood obesity is a growing concern. For healthy growth and development, Children and teens should accumulate 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.¹ Playing games like basketball, cricket or hockey as well as skipping rope can be beneficial.

24 **DO SWIMMING**



Swimming is a good exercise. Those who regularly swim, even after just a short period, can see improvements. It helps to lower heart rates, improves blood pressure, breathing and blood circulation.

26 **CARRY OUT HOUSEHOLD WORK AND GARDENING**

Activities such as gardening, do-it-yourself projects and household work may be as good as formal exercise when it comes to reducing the risk for heart attack and stroke especially for people aged 60 and older.

QUIT SMOKING

The first step to quitting smoking is to understand the risks associated with it. Smoking makes the arteries tighten and the heart work harder. It also raises blood pressure and reduces the blood flow to the heart. Hence, it is important to quit smoking.



27

QUIT SMOKING AND LIMIT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

From damaging the blood vessels and reducing the amount of oxygen in the blood, smoking dramatically increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, and peripheral arterial disease. Quitting can be challenging, but it's a great first step towards better heart health. Use nicotine replacement therapy which includes chewing gum, lozenges and nasal spray. This reduces the cravings and withdrawal symptoms that may hinder a person's attempt to give up smoking.

Also, excess alcohol intake causes a rise in blood pressure and increases the risk of heart disease.¹⁹

REGULAR MONITORING

High blood pressure and high cholesterol level can damage the heart and blood vessels. Blood pressure is the pressure exerted by the blood on the walls of the arteries when the heart pumps the blood. High blood pressure that persists over a long time is one of the main risk factors for heart disease. As you get older, the chances of having ongoing high blood pressure increase.

Cholesterol is a waxy substance. It is essential to build cells, make vitamins and other hormones. The body produces cholesterol naturally and is also found in some foods. But too much cholesterol can pose a problem by blocking the blood flow to the heart. Thus, regular screening is necessary to know what your numbers are and whether you need to take action.



28

MAINTAIN BLOOD PRESSURE LEVEL GOALS

As per the 2015 study, lowering systolic blood pressure, or commonly known as the top number, to 120 mmHg reduced the risk of death from cardiovascular disease, heart failure, stroke, and heart attack by 25%.¹⁵

For adults age 18 and older, blood pressure lower than 130/85 mmHg is considered normal whereas blood pressure $\geq 140/90$ mmHg is considered as high blood pressure.¹² Try to control the blood pressure by increasing physical activity, losing weight, following healthy diet, reducing stress as well as quitting smoking which further helps to protect the heart health.



29 MAINTAIN HEALTHY CHOLESTEROL LEVELS



There are two type of cholesterol: one is low-density lipoprotein (LDL) which is bad cholesterol and another is high-density lipoprotein (HDL) which is considered as good cholesterol. Too much bad cholesterol and not enough good cholesterol can increase the risk of heart disease. High levels of triglyceride is also a significant risk factor for heart disease. Therefore, it is necessary to check the cholesterol and triglyceride levels, to know your numbers and assess the risk:¹⁴

LDL Cholesterol, "lower is better"

The optimal level is <100 mg/dL

HDL Cholesterol, "more is better"

The goal should be 40-60 mg/dL

Triglyceride, "lower is better"

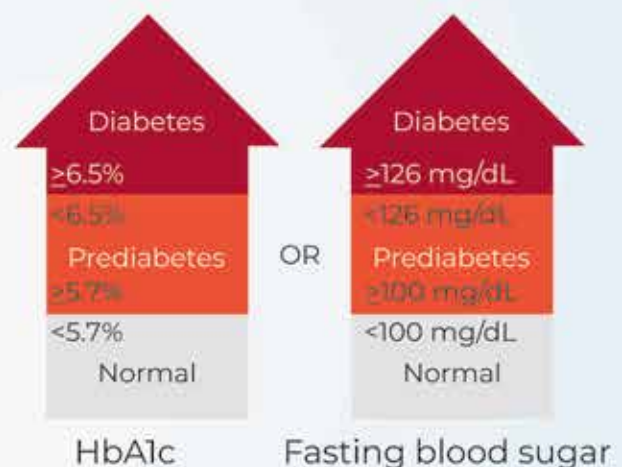
The optimal level is <150 mg/dL

To help improve cholesterol levels, try to reduce saturated fat like meat, butter and cheese. Eat foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids such a fish or fish oils. Eat more nuts and seeds such as almonds. Have daily physical activity which also promotes weight loss.

30 MONITOR BLOOD SUGAR REGULARLY



As per findings from the National Institutes of Health, heart disease and stroke are the most common causes of death in diabetic individuals. Diabetes is diagnosed if¹⁵



Try to change lifestyle by controlling food portions, avoiding junk food, snacks and sweets, reducing the frequency of eating out and increasing physical activity.

STRESS-FREE LIFESTYLE

When stress becomes a constant companion it can cause some serious negative consequences on heart health. Finding alternative ways to manage stress such as yoga, relaxation exercises or meditation can help improve your health.



31 PRACTICE YOGA OR ASANAS



Severe stress and high anxiety levels can directly harm heart health. Practising yoga may help lower stress as well as relax the body and mind. Try to do asanas like Pranayama and some breathing techniques.

32 REGULAR MEDITATION



Since stress can cause a fight-or-flight response which can lead to heart failure and heart attacks, it is suggested to have daily meditation for 20 minutes that helps one to comfort and reset whenever pressure is rising.

33 GET EIGHT HOURS OF SLEEP AT NIGHT



Sleep deprivation has been linked to high blood pressure which is one of the risk factors for heart disease. Thus, it is important to get into the bed early and to reduce the excessive screen time right before bed.

34 FIND SOMETHING TO LAUGH ABOUT



Laughter can significantly lift one's spirit by reducing emotional stress and helping maintain a positive approach. The act of laughing dilates the arteries and lowers the high blood pressure by improving the blood flow.

35 FOLLOW A GOOD ORAL HYGIENE



It has been reported that good oral hygiene can lead to less systemic inflammation. Although, detailed research is required to evaluate whether or not this decreases rates of heart attacks, having a healthy mouth is essential to preserve overall wellness.

37 PRACTICE GRATITUDE



Individuals who focused on feelings of appreciation are more happy and healthy with lower stress levels which reduces risk of cardiac disease.⁶

39 PERFORM REGULAR HEART SCAN

Getting a screening test, such as Electrocardiography (ECG), or echocardiogram (Echo) might help one determine the risk of developing early heart disease. This test is simple, widely available, and cost-effective. It can detect signs of heart disease before the patient even notices any symptoms of heart damage.

36 GO FOR REGULAR HORMONAL CHECK-UP

Higher oestrogen levels in women can affect the way blood vessels stretch and contract, making them more susceptible to arterial tears and blood clots. Women on hormonal birth pills, hormone replacement therapy, or who are pregnant have a slightly higher risk of heart problems. Therefore, it is recommended to consult the doctor about other birth control options. On the other hand, maintaining a healthy weight is another way to keep oestrogen levels in the heart-healthy range.

38 MAKE TIME FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS



Psychological stress and anxiety are directly associated with heart disease across all the age group. Being socially active and connecting with friends and family helps in reducing stress levels and keeps an individual healthy.

40 TAKE MEDICINES REGULARLY

Medicines may be an important part of your treatment plan. Medicine may help you to meet the blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol goals and further reduce the risk of blood clots, heart attack, or stroke. To improve medicine adherence, set an alarm, use a weekly pillbox or put a reminder note on the calendar. Check off when you take each dose. This can help you avoid missing doses or taking too many.



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Summary:

- **Nearly half of all premature deaths may be due to unhealthy lifestyle choices such as insufficient exercise, poor diet and smoking. These risk factors increase the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, heart attack and stroke.**
- **Research about cardiovascular disease risk factors suggests that making even small lifestyle changes can reduce the risk of coronary artery disease, heart attack, stroke and other serious cardiovascular conditions.**
- **The lifestyle changes primarily include dietary changes and regular exercise.**
- **Dietary changes like eating more fresh vegetables and fruits, reducing fatty and oily food help to keep your diabetes and hypertension under control which in turn reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease.**
- **Regular exercise like brisk walking, cycling, yoga, swimming, performing dance and aerobics helps to keep your heart healthy and not only reduces the risk of cardiac diseases but also helps to prevent it to some extent.**
- **Even small lifestyle changes have a great impact on reducing cardiovascular risks. It is essential to understand that these lifestyle modifications are to be implemented along with your regular medications as directed by your doctor.**



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