



ON CALL

Lay Community Health Advisors

How can you protect your heart at any age

Introduction

This short handbook will provide you with some additional information about how to take care of your heart health.

This handbook will be useful in promoting positive mental health with members of your local health network. Thanks to reading this handbook you will know about importance of taking good care of your heart.

Usually we start to think about taking about our heart health in our middle ages, or even more likely, when something bad already happens.

Young people tend to ignore their heart health assuming that all heart health problems like cardiovascular disease doesn't concerns them and won't be any threat for a long time if at all. Unfortunately, bespoken cardiovascular disease is one of the most common deadly disease and in most cases is preventable which means that if we only take care of it now we most likely can avoid it.

Having healthy heart is side effect of overall healthy lifestyle. Of course there are some exceptions, like people with genetic inherited heart syndromes. In their

cases a professional help with protecting their heart is needed.

In this handbook we will focus on people without ongoing medical conditions and will give you few advices on how to protect your heart health at any age.

Cut down on salt

Even if salt enriches taste of each dish, and eliminating it from our diet completely can be really bad for our health, we need to eat it in moderation. Our organism needs sodium to function well, yet providing too much salt can lead to high blood pressure, which in order leads to increasing risk of developing heart disease or a stroke. Reducing salt intake will not only help your heart health, but also will stop your body from water retention and you will find more types of food tastier, as adding more salt deadens the sense of the taste buds.

Moderation is really important here. The maximum adult daily intake should be no more than 6g of salt, as we shouldn't provide our body with more than 3g of clean sodium every day.

Avoid sugar

Sugar itself doesn't have a bad influence on our heart, but if our diet is rich in sugar, getting overweight is inevitable. Weighting

too much raises our blood pressure which increases our risk of heart disease.

Go easy with fats

We are not talking here about so-called healthy fats, but saturated fat. This kind of fat can be easily found in butter, margarine, fatty meats, dairy fats and processed foods like pies, pastries and cakes. Consuming too much of saturated fat may increase cholesterol levels, which leads to heart problems.

Don't forget about fruits and vegetables

It is said that we should eat at least five portions of fruits and vegetables per day. Thanks to following this advice you will provide your body with enough amount of potassium, that it will help lower your blood pressure. Also other nutrients that can be found in fruit and vegetables vitamins, minerals and fibre also help to keep your heart healthy and to lower your cholesterol.

Eat more fish

Make sure that your diet is rich in omega-3 acid, which can be found in oily fish, spinach, walnuts, flaxseed and canola oil and pumpkin seeds.

Mentioned acid omega-3 is thought to help to lower cholesterol level.

Quit smoking

As you probably already know smoking is bad for your health, and you can read it on almost every pack of cigarettes you can see. Smokers are big risk group when it comes to several diseases, including heart attack.

Bear in mind, that smoking by damaging your arteries, reducing your blood oxygen levels and raising your blood pressure make heart health problems more likely to happen. Quitting smoking may be hard, but will help you to significantly lower that risk.

Drink with moderation

Drinking large amounts of alcohol, as well as frequent drinking smaller amounts of it, is really harmful for your heart. It may lead to diseases of the heart muscle, called cardiomyopathy and raise your blood pressure making strokes or heart attacks more likely to happen. Too much alcohol can cause high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms and heart muscle damage.

Keep moving

Two and a half an hour of moderate-intensity activity a week will help you to lower your risk of developing heart disease.

Watch your weight

You don't have to be super fit or super thin to lower your risk of heart health problems – simply not being overweight will do the trick.

If you're overweight, your risk of high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and risk of cardiovascular disease is higher than normal.

Aging can cause changes in the heart

Even if all above mentioned tips concerns everyone, we have to remember that aging can cause changes in the heart and blood vessels, becoming one of the main factors of heart diseases.

We can lower our chances of having heart disease in old age by following all above mentioned rules.

Still, while we get older our heart:

- can't beat as fast during any physical activity or times of stress as it used to when we were younger
- has more fatty deposits in the walls of its arteries
- stiffness of the large arteries has increased
- heart muscle weakens,

Even if likeness of heart disease increases with age, we can slow those processes down and even avoid getting any heart disease by following healthy diet and exercising a bit.

If we are not diagnosed with any cardiac disease, we don't have to watch our heart rate and blood pressure every day, but when we start to worry, doing this kind of simple screening can give us a clearer view on health state of our heart.

How to use this Resource with your Local Health Group?

This handbook presents information on the topic of how can you protect your heart at any age. It helps us understand that taking care of our heart health condition throughout our lifetime can benefit our health a lot.

Reviewing this handbook before each session with the group will help you to lead a discussion about the topic. However, you have to be aware that handbook provides only general tips, and it doesn't have to relate to each individual.

In the resources you will also find a PowerPoint presentation which will help you to explain the topic to your group and start a conversation with them.

Group Activity

After you have shared the digital resource and the PowerPoint presentation with your group, you can start a group discussion asking if all group members think that they are taking proper care of their heart health.

Once they are finished ask them to think about members of their community and their lifestyle. Does all of them eat well and exercise every now and then?

Let your group think how they can heart health care to all of community members and let them share ideas with the whole group.





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