



# HEART DISEASE

## Ask Your Pharmacist

National Wear Red Day is an annual event conducted on the first Friday in February when Americans nationwide will take women's health to heart by wearing red to show their support for women's heart disease awareness.

When we think about someone with heart disease, we tend to visualize some older person, usually male. A fit 40-year-old Grammy winner, Toni Braxton, is the subject of a lead story in this month's Newsweek (Online) Magazine. An unlikely candidate for heart disease, four years ago Braxton felt tired and short of breath, with "tightness" in her chest. She ended up in the emergency room and found that she suffered from pericarditis, an inflammation of the lining of the heart. Indeed, heart disease kills more than 460,000 American women a year—more than any other cause of death. A New York University cardiologist Jennifer Mieres, the national spokesperson for the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women campaign calls it 'an equal opportunity killer.'

These campaigns have made a difference, increasing awareness among women from 34 percent in 2000 to 57 percent in 2006. Yet many women still fail to make the connection between risk factors and their own risk of developing heart disease. In a 2006 American Heart Association survey, 77 percent of caucasian women knew that heart disease was the biggest killer of women, but only 38 percent of black women and 34 percent of latina women were aware of it.

So, this Valentine's Day, as you gaze upon roses and nibble on chocolate, spare a thought for your heart; that hard-working, under appreciated muscle you can't live without. It began beating within your mother's womb about four weeks after conception; it will continue until the day of your death.

The most common type of heart disease is coronary artery disease: blockages of the arteries that supply the blood to the heart. As a result, women can suffer from heart attacks, or their hearts can fail to pump properly. Typically, post-menopausal women are at greater risk of heart problems, but younger women who smoke also suffer from a higher incidence of trouble.

Our pharmacists can also help to assess your risk for heart disease - come in to take advantage of our screening and consultation programs. An abundance of new research proves what physicians and pharmacists have known all along; exercise can prevent disease and induce lifelong wellness, especially for women. In fact, according to the Archives of Internal Medicine, regular exercise may help women to remain independent even as they age into their golden years. This particular study looked at 229 women of varying fitness levels and found that the most active women, through either sports or regular leisure activities, were most

likely to live independently 14 years into the study, when many of the women had reached at least 80 years old.

Furthermore, women can dramatically reduce their risk for heart disease by making a commitment to regular exercise. In fact, a woman's fitness level on a treadmill stress test can indicate whether that woman will develop heart disease, according to a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Women who performed poorly on the treadmill test were 3.5 times more likely to develop heart disease than active women who handled the test well.

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Some risk factors for heart disease cannot be changed, such as genetics. But even if heart disease runs in your family, that's not a reason to throw in the towel. Many factors come together to create heart problems. A person who doesn't have a genetic risk may develop heart disease due to smoking, not exercising, and eating poorly; whereas a genetically at-risk individual who eats healthfully and exercises regularly may never develop heart disease. While you can't change your genetics, let's look at some of the risk factors you can change.

*High blood cholesterol* - Consuming a diet high in saturated fats increases your total cholesterol level more than anything else; dietary changes often yield favorable results.

*High blood pressure* -- One in four American adults has high blood pressure, which overworks the heart and blood vessels, eventually causing heart enlargement and failure, kidney failure, and hardening of the arteries. Diet and other lifestyle changes may reduce high blood pressure.

*Diabetes* - Proper diabetes management, through diet and exercise, can drastically reduce diabetes-related heart disease risk.

*Overweight* -About 65.4% of the adult population is overweight or obese, a condition that usually coexists with high blood cholesterol, and stresses the entire cardiovascular system.

*Physical inactivity* - Exercise stimulates blood flow and keeps the heart healthy; a sedentary lifestyle has been linked with drastically increased risk for heart disease.

People vary widely in their greatest risk factors for heart disease. Two people may be at equal risk for developing the disease, but from completely different factors. Contact our pharmacist today for a personalized assessment of your risk factors.

### HEALTHY EATING

Nutrition plays a key role in the process of cardiovascular health. It is also the crucial aspect of circulation and cholesterol metabolism. Exercise is the other valuable component.

To reduce problems of the heart and circulatory system, eat

for your best health

**Visit our pharmacy or website to learn more about lowering your risk for heart disease.**

# HEART DISEASE (Continued)

plenty of foods that are high in vitamins and minerals. These foods are high in antioxidants and studies clearly show these are important in reducing risks of heart disease. Stop eating red meat, and change your protein source to cold water fish, such as salmon, trout, or halibut. These fish are high in fatty acids that help protect the heart. Drink more water and don't count other beverages as part of a 64 oz. minimum quantity to consume. Water will help you circulate your nutrients and maintain a better balance of your body's fluids.

## GET ON A GOOD SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

Modern day foods - processed, packaged, and preserved - contain few of the potent nutrients that our bodies so desperately need. For this reason, pharmacists often recommend supplementation with certain vitamins and other nutrients to fill in the gaps of our diet. This cannot be truer than with heart health. Our circulatory systems greatly benefit from chemicals called antioxidants, found in vitamins A, C, E, and other nutrients. Unfortunately, our diets often cannot sufficiently meet this need. Contact our pharmacist today to learn more about custom supplementation for a healthy heart.

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Herbal therapy has also been suggested for these problems. Two herbs that quickly come to mind are Hawthorne Berries and Garlic. With the press that has been generated about dangers between herbs and medicines, we would strongly recommend that you come into our pharmacy to discuss their use prior to trying them.

## MANAGE YOUR CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

Garlic has been proven to effectively lower total cholesterol by improving the "good" HDL cholesterol, and lowering the "bad" LDL cholesterol.

Many patients are now choosing natural medicine for cholesterol management, rather than a lifetime supply of medications that often carry side effects. Research has consistently shown that nutritional supplements can significantly improve blood cholesterol levels.

Marine Fish Oils contain omega-3 fatty acids, the "good" fats that maintain cell function and may help to improve cholesterol.

Niacin, commonly known as vitamin B3, has been shown to help lower total cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

Other supplements often recommended for cholesterol management include: Vitamin E, Guggulipid, L-Carnitine, Coenzyme Q10, Green Tea, and Psyllium Fiber. Our pharmacist will be happy to discuss these supplements with you.

## STOP SMOKING

Smoking is implicated in both heart disease and cholesterol problems. Smoking will cause plaque to build up in the arteries, and also will decrease your ability to eat properly and exercise properly. Smoking is indicated in blood pressure changes, and is dangerous for many other reasons.

## COUNTER STRESS

Finally, look at ways to counter stress in your life. Hypertension is a physical symptom of stress, and in order to lead a quality life, we all must find the means to remain free of stress.

Studies suggest that 80% of the visits to physicians are related in some manner to stress. Exercise will help relieve some of the problem, but dealing with mental stress also requires a conscious effort not to allow it to control us. There are stress management courses and counselors. There are books and tapes that will help. Learning to balance your life, your work, and your free time will all help to counter stress levels.

## CONSULT A PHARMACIST IF YOU ARE TALKING NUMEROUS MEDICATIONS

All chemicals that enter the body interact with each other and the body itself. For example, grapefruit juice has been shown to increase the effectiveness of some statin drugs, resulting in damage to the muscles and other tissues. Some medications used for high blood pressure, such as calcium channel blockers (verapamil, Procardia, Adalat, and many others) may cause nutrient depletions leading to fatigue.

Nutritional supplementation may help to prevent depletion, but these supplements may then interact dangerously with your other medications. You should always consult with your pharmacist before self-supplementing, especially if you are taking multiple medications. Contact our pharmacist to learn more about our life-saving medication review, which will examine your medications and supplements for interactions, depletions, and other safety issues.