

Ayurveda - Health notes

Healthy Heart

THE STATISTICS ARE FRIGHTENING:

- * Heart disease is the number one killer of both men and women in the United States.
- * Every 20 seconds, someone in the United States has a heart attack.
- * One in four Americans has some form of heart disease.
- * Every 34 seconds someone in the United States dies of heart disease.
- * Heart disease takes more lives than the next seven leading causes of death combined.

Yet, both modern medicine and ayurveda concur that there are things you can do every day to keep your heart healthy. Here we offer some suggestions to get you started. Pick one or two and start with those if you like, then add a couple more every few weeks until you are naturally living a heart-healthy lifestyle. Bonus: Not just your heart, your entire physiology will thank you.

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CULTIVATE THE POSITIVE

While warding off excess stress is essential to prevent the emotional heart from wasting away, actively seeking mental and emotional well-being can help the emotional heart flourish. Ayurveda talks about ojas, the substance that maintains life. The finest by-product of digestion and the master coordinator of all activities of mind and body, ojas leads to bliss, contentment, vitality and longevity. Inner strength and poise and the cultivation of positive attitudes and emotions increase ojas. Spend time everyday on those activities that give you this contentment and happiness. Listen to soothing or uplifting music, enjoy serene natural beauty, practice uplifting aromatherapy and sip relaxing herbal teas. Maintain a positive attitude and walk away from situations that distress or anger you.

EAT RIGHT

Arguably the most critical step you can take towards heart health is to eat a heart-friendly diet. For a society used to fast food and eating-on-the-go, this is also arguably the most difficult step to take and maintain. But there are small things you can do to make your diet more heart-healthy-eat more servings of fresh fruits and vegetables, start your day with stewed apples or pears, include soaked blanched almonds in your diet, dress your veggies with fresh lime juice and eat heart-friendly spices such as fresh-ground black pepper and the antioxidant power-spice turmeric. Choose fresh foods over processed foods or leftovers, light foods over rich, deep-fried ones and warm cooked foods over cold, heavy foods. A balanced antioxidant rasayana such as Amrit from Maharishi Ayurveda is excellent nutritional support and published research confirms that Amrit helps reduce LDL cholesterol, which has been implicated in plaque build-up.

EAT MINDFULLY

How you eat is as important for heart health (and overall health) as what you eat. Eat moderately-the ideal ayurvedic "portion" is what fits in your two cupped palms. Don't skip meals, because eating three meals at regular times each day "trains" your digestion to anticipate and digest your food. Stimulate a sluggish digestion with ginger, salt and lime-Maharishi Ayurveda's Ginger Preserve is convenient and tastes delicious. Have lassi, made by blending one part fresh yogurt with three parts cool water, with lunch. Spike it with roasted

by blending one part fresh yogurt with three parts cool water, with lunch. Spike it with roasted ground cumin and fresh cilantro for flavor. Don't tax your digestion by eating late at night or eating a heavy meal at dinner.

CLEANSE AMA FROM THE PHYSIOLOGY

Arterial plaque is ama-toxic matter that builds up in your blood vessels because your physiology cannot get rid of it efficiently. Ayurveda recommends a program of internal cleansing with every change of season to help your body flush out ama. The Elim-Tox or Elim-Tox-O herbal supplements are formulated to cleanse the fat tissue (medha) of ama. Other things you can do to clear out ama-drink lots of warm water through the day, go to bed by 10 p.m. to help the body cleanse itself during the natural purification time, eat a lighter diet high in fiber and antioxidants from fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts. Avoid drugs, alcohol and smoking.

EXERCISE MODERATELY AND REGULARLY

You don't have to do a strenuous workout five times a week. The key is regularity. If you follow the ayurvedic principle of balaardh-exercising to half your capacity-you can exercise every single day without straining your muscles. Walking is excellent exercise for everyone and excellent therapy as well. The early morning is ideal for taking a 30-minute walk. It will not only help your heart, it will prepare you for the day by charging up your circulation and your metabolism.

GET YOUR ZZZS

Research studies have linked sleep deprivation to blood pressure problems, depression and other factors that increase the risk of heart disease. Ayurveda considers sleep just as important as diet in maintaining health. Practice good bedtime habits-favor restful, calming activities as bedtime draws near to help disconnect the mind from the senses. Keep your bedroom clear of distractions-television, computers, other work-related material. Maintain a temperature that's comfortable. Stay away from stimulants in the evening. Go to bed by 10 p.m.-early to bed and early to rise still work to keep you healthy and energetic through the day.

BALANCE THE AYURVEDIC FACTORS

From the ayurvedic perspective, the heart is the seat of prana-life energy-which is maintained by a delicate balance of agni (the solar energy element) and soma (the lunar energy element). Excess mental and emotional stress wastes away soma in the heart. The heart, as we said earlier, is also the seat of ojas, the substance within us that maintains life and promotes bliss and longevity. To protect and nourish the physical heart and the emotional heart, it is essential to promote both soma and ojas. Heart health is governed also by three sub-doshas: Sadhaka Pitta (emotional balance), Avalambaka Kapha (stability and strength) and Vyana Vata (blood flow and beat), which, though present everywhere in the body, has its seat in the heart.

The new Cardio Support nutritional supplement from Maharishi Ayurveda is formulated to balance all these ayurvedic factors. The combination of Shatavari, Holy Basil, Corallium rubrum, Indian Tinospora and Sacred Lotus promotes soma. Shilajit, Zinc bhasma, Mica bhasma and Licorice promote ojas. Arjuna, Cabbage Rose, Licorice, Shatavari, Mica bhasma, Indian Tinospora, Corallium rubrum and Sugar Cane pacify Sadhaka Pitta. Avalambaka Kapha is supported by Shilajit, Guggul, Zinc bhasma, Ostrea edulis bhasma, Turbinella rapa bhasma, Cypraea moneta bhasma, Aloe vera, Holy Basil and Hemidesmus indicus. Vyana Vata is balanced by Guggul, Boerhavia, Mica bhasma, Licorice, Holy Basil Ashwagandha and Malabar Nut. In particular, there are three star health herbs in this formulation-Arjuna, renowned in ayurveda for its ability to pacify Sadhaka Pitta and to nourish both the physical and the emotional heart, Ashwagandha, which helps enhance natural resistance to stress and promote better sleep and Guggul, which has been shown in research to help lower cholesterol.