

A chat with Dr.Devi Shetty (Heart Specialist), Narayana Hrudayalaya, Bangalore was arranged by WIPRO for its employees. The transcript of the chat is given below. Useful for everyone.

Q: What are the thumb rules for a layman to take care of his heart?

Ans:

1. Diet - Less of carbohydrate, more of protein, less oil
2. Exercise - Half an hour's walk, at least five days a week; avoid lifts and avoid sitting for a longtime
3. Quit smoking
4. Control weight
5. Control blood pressure and sugar

Q: Is eating non-veg food (fish) good for the heart?

Ans: No

Q: It's still a grave shock to hear that some apparently healthy person gets a cardiac arrest. How do we understand it in perspective?

Ans: This is called silent attack; that is why we recommend everyone past the age of 30 to undergo routine health checkups.

Q: Are heart diseases hereditary?

Ans: Yes

Q: What are the ways in which the heart is stressed? What practices do you suggest to de-stress?

Ans: Change your attitude towards life. Do not look for perfection in everything in life.

Q: Is walking better than jogging or is more intensive exercise required to keep a healthy heart?

Ans: Walking is better than jogging since jogging leads to early fatigue and injury to joints

Q: You have done so much for the poor and needy. What has inspired you to do so?

Ans: Mother Theresa, who was my patient.

Q: Can people with low blood pressure suffer heart diseases?

Ans: Extremely rare.

Q: Does cholesterol accumulates right from an early age (I'm currently only 22) or do you have to worry about it only after you are above 30 years of age?

Ans: Cholesterol accumulates from childhood.

Q: How do irregular eating habits affect the heart?

Ans: You tend to eat junk food when the habits are irregular and your body's enzyme release for digestion gets confused.

Q: How can I control cholesterol content without using medicines?

Ans: Control diet, walk and eat walnut.

Q: Can yoga prevent heart ailments?

Ans: Yoga helps.

Q: Which is the best and worst food for the heart?

Ans: Fruits and vegetables are the best and the worst is oil.

Q: Which oil is better - Groundnut, Sunflower, Olive?

Ans: All oils are bad.

Q: What is the routine checkup one should go through? Is there any specific test?

Ans: Routine blood test to ensure Sugar, Cholesterol is ok. Check BP, Treadmill test after an echo.

Q: What are the first aid steps to be taken on a heart attack?

Ans: Help the person into a sleeping position, place an aspirin tablet under the tongue with a Sorbitrate tablet if available, and rush him to a coronary care unit since the maximum casualty takes place within the first hour.

Q: How do you differentiate between pain caused by a heart attack and that caused due to gastric trouble?

Ans: Extremely difficult without ECG.

Q: What is the main cause of a steep increase in heart problems amongst youngsters? I see people of about 30-40 yrs of age having heart attacks and serious heart problems.

Ans: Increased awareness has increased incidents. Also, sedentary lifestyles, smoking, junk food, lack of exercise in a country where people are genetically three times more vulnerable for heart attacks than Europeans and Americans.

Q: Is it possible for a person to have BP outside the normal range of 120/80 and yet be perfectly healthy?

Ans: Yes.

Q: Marriages within close relatives can lead to heart problems for the child. Is it true?

Ans : Yes, co-sanguinity leads to congenital abnormalities and you may not have a software engineer as a child.

Q: Many of us have an irregular daily routine and many a times we have to stay late nights in office. Does this affect our heart? What precautions would you recommend?

Ans : When you are young, nature protects you against all these irregularities. However, as you grow older, respect the biological clock.

Q: Will taking anti-hypertensive drugs cause some other complications (short / long term)?

Ans : Yes, most drugs have some side effects. However, modern anti- hypertensive drugs are extremely safe.

Q: Will consuming more coffee/tea lead to heart attacks?

Ans : No.

Q: Are asthma patients more prone to heart disease?

Ans : No.

Q: How would you define junk food?

Ans : Fried food like Kentucky, McDonalds, Samosas, and even Masala Dosas.

Q: You mentioned that Indians are three times more vulnerable. What is the reason for this, as Europeans and Americans also eat a lot of junk food?

Ans: Every race is vulnerable to some disease and unfortunately, Indians are vulnerable for the most expensive disease.

Q: Does consuming bananas help reduce hypertension?

Ans : No.

Q: Can a person help himself during a heart attack (Because we see a lot of forwarded emails on this)?

Ans : Yes. Lie down comfortably and put an Aspirin tablet of any description under the tongue and ask someone to take you to the nearest coronary care unit without any delay and do not wait for the ambulance since most of the time, the ambulance does not turn up.

Q: Do, in any way, low white blood cells and low hemoglobin count lead to heart problems?

Ans : No. But it is ideal to have normal hemoglobin level to increase your exercise capacity.

Q: Sometimes, due to the hectic schedule we are not able to exercise. So, does walking while doing daily chores at home or climbing the stairs in the house, work as a substitute for exercise?

Ans : Certainly. Avoid sitting continuously for more than half an hour and even the act of getting out of the chair and going to another chair and sitting helps a lot.

Q: Is there a relation between heart problems and blood sugar?

Ans: Yes. A strong relationship since diabetics are more vulnerable to heart attacks than non-diabetics.

Q: What are the things one needs to take care of after a heart operation?

Ans : Diet, Exercise, drugs on time, Control Cholesterol, BP, weight.

Q: Are people working on night shifts more vulnerable to heart disease when compared to day shift workers?

Ans : No.

Q: What are the modern anti- hypertensive drugs?

Ans : There are hundreds of drugs and your doctor will chose the right combination for your problem, but my suggestion is to avoid the drugs and go for natural ways of controlling blood pressure by walk, diet to reduce weight and changing attitudes towards lifestyles.

Q: Does Dispirin or similar headache pills increase the risk of heart attacks?

Ans : No.

Q: Why is the rate of heart attacks more in men than in women?

Ans : Nature protects women till the age of 45.

Q: How can one keep the heart in a good condition?

Ans : Eat a healthy diet, avoid junk food, exercise everyday, do not smoke and, go for health checkups if you are past the age of 30(once in six months recommended).

-----*****-----