



Heart Healthy Tips

Lexington Clinic Cardiology

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Listed in **Best Doctors in America**



TREE NUTS: A European study showed that participants who ate nuts showed a 12 to 24% decrease in cardiac mortality compared to those who did not consume nuts. Those who ate a small handful twice a week showed a 16% decrease in cardiovascular mortality. The effect was greatest with tree nuts, for example, walnuts, almonds and hazelnuts. Less benefit was noted with peanuts.



DARK CHOCOLATE: A German study has shown that eating even small amounts of dark chocolate led to a significant decrease in blood pressure. Cocoa rich foods have been linked to a decreased incidence of cardiovascular disease due to the improvement in endothelial function related to polyphenols in dark chocolate. No benefit was noted with white chocolate.



NAPPING: Men who take naps were up to 50% less likely to have a heart attack (myocardial infarction) according to a Greek study. Those who napped for 30 minutes, had a 30% reduction, while those who napped one hour had a 50% reduction. There was no greater benefit beyond one hour. Studies have also shown patients sleeping less than eight hours each night are more likely to be overweight.



HAPPINESS: Depression in coronary patients is an even stronger predictor of future cardiac events than smoking or cholesterol levels. This also applies to those with past history of depression, even 10 years before.



DIET FOR THE HEART: The Mediterranean diet has been shown to reduce death from heart disease and some cancers. It also helps lower high cholesterol and reduce obesity. The diet includes increased Omega 3s (mostly from olive oil), increased fruit and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, tree nuts, fish, poultry and low use of red meat (twice a month on average).



ALCOHOL: There is evidence that a modest alcohol consumption of 1-2 drinks a day leads to a 40% decrease in heart attacks. Higher alcohol consumption increases cancer risk.



PETS: Pet owners who have sustained a heart attack (myocardial infarction) are 20% less likely to have another heart attack as compared to non-pet owners.



MARITAL SATISFACTION: Divorce has the same cardiovascular risk as smoking one pack of cigarettes daily.



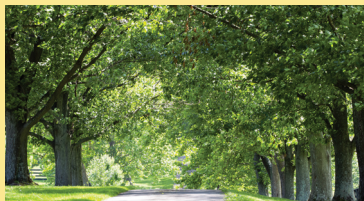
SEX: In a large British study, men who had sex at least twice per week had a 50% reduction in all causes of death when compared to those who had sex less than once per month. This was true when adjusted for age, social class, smoking and prior cardiac events.



RELAXING AT HOME: Men who can relax at home, without mentally bringing their work home with them, were 30% less likely to have a heart attack than those who could not.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: There is strong evidence that just 15 to 30 minutes of daily gentle exercise reduces coronary risk by 20%. Greater duration & intensity showed even greater benefit. *“Walk your dog every day, even if you don’t have one.”*



NATURE: Patients recovering from surgery in a room with a view of nature, versus a drab room had less postoperative symptoms, needed less pain medications and were discharged sooner.



EDUCATION: An Irish study showed that a higher level of education was associated with a significantly lower risk of cardiac events, even after controlling for known cardiac risk factors.



APPLES: A recent study showed that women who ate 75 gm of dried apples daily had a 23% decrease in LDL (bad cholesterol) and a 4% increase in HDL (good cholesterol) compared to other dried fruits. Over one year, they had no weight gain and in fact lost 3.3 lbs on average.



DENTAL CARE: Good dental care is important. After correcting for age, exercise, diet, smoking, weight, blood cholesterol level, alcohol use and health care, those with periodontal disease had a higher risk of heart disease, stroke and premature death. Those with periodontal disease have double the risk of dying from cardiovascular disease.