



Keys to a Healthy Heart

Dietary fat, inactivity, and emotional stress are the root causes of heart disease. A sure way of getting rid of heart disease is to get to the heart of its cause: lifestyle.

Dietary fat in the form of cholesterol is the culprit that leads to plaque buildup in the arteries. Cholesterol is essential to life; however, the body produces its own supply and the excess from meat, eggs, and dairy can quickly elevate blood cholesterol levels. A plant-based diet is free of saturated fats and is the first step to a healthy heart. God's recommendations are found in the first book of the Bible, Genesis 1:29. The Genesis diet supplies all the essential nutrients to keep the body in a healthy condition and free of disease. It is a diet consisting of fruit, nuts, grains, and vegetables.



Another key to a healthy heart is getting stress levels under control. Constant surges of cortisol and adrenaline (which is what happens during stress) destroy the delicate lining of the blood vessels, thereby paving the way for the buildup of cholesterol, glucose, and other fats. The goal is to get control of your stress before it gets control of you.

It is also important to hone in on your emotional triggers, learning what they are and having reaction control techniques – such as deep breathing – that will take the sting out of each emotional bite. We have always heard that we should count to 10 slowly and breathe deeply when we are angry. This is beneficial to the body in several ways. Deep breathing decreases the stress levels by lowering blood pressure and heart rate, and it causes the release of endorphins and enhances the brain's ability to focus.



Another powerful technique is reality testing. Say you have been hit with a trigger and your emotions are like an out-of-control freight train. This would be a good time to do some deep breathing and assess your thoughts.

Ask yourself: on a scale of 1-10 what is the importance of this in the scheme of things? By questioning yourself you are putting the pause button on your emotions and engaging the frontal lobe of the brain. Reality testing helps to put concerns in the right perspective.

Inactivity, a major risk factor for heart disease, makes exercise a major key in prevention. It not only enhances physical strength and endurance but also improves the efficiency and function of the heart in a variety of ways. Exercise lowers the blood pressure, increases oxygen efficiency, and enlarges coronary arteries – all of which decrease the workload of the heart. Exercise also has a profound impact upon cholesterol levels, increasing the good cholesterol, the HDL (high-density lipoprotein). Higher HDL levels help remove the bad cholesterol, LDL (low-density lipoprotein), and exercise also lowers triglyceride levels.



Cholesterol and other fats love sticking to the walls of the arteries. A benefit of exercise is that it increases the circulation, and increased circulation diminishes the accumulation of these fatty deposits.

--excerpt taken from *Mind-Body-God Connection, How I Found Healing, A New Way Of Looking At Disease* by Darlene D. Hall, RN. Xulon Press, 2010.