



# WORLD HEART DAY

September 29, 2020

World Heart Day is a global event to raise awareness and educate people about Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) and ways to help keep our hearts healthy. Created by the World Heart Foundation, World Heart Day is designed to help encourage people to take care of their heart's health and control risk factors that may contribute to CVD both for themselves and others. World Heart Day happens every year on 29th September.

## What is Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)?

CVD refers to the disease of the heart, blood vessels or vascular disease of the brain. This includes heart attacks and strokes. CVD is the number one cause of death in the world. CVD can be genetic, but certain risk factors can be controlled to help prevent us from suffering from CVD.

Here are some of the causes:

- Physical factors - smoking, an unhealthy diet, stress and a lack of exercise can all contribute to CVD - trying to control these and monitoring blood pressure regularly can help to reduce the risk of CVD
- Heart conditions, hypertension and high cholesterol
- Genetic predisposition through family history or existing conditions, such as diabetes
- Age - as you get older your risk of CVD increases, so it is even more important to look after your health

## 6 powerful ways you can care and strengthen your heart

Heart disease is the number 1 cause of death worldwide, and it's mostly preventable by changing your lifestyle and managing risk factors. Here are seven ways you can prevent becoming a statistic.

### 1. Get moving

Your heart is a muscle and as with any muscle, exercise is what strengthens it.

Exercising helps you maintain a healthy weight, manage stress and keep your heart strong. You are twice as likely to develop heart disease if you have an inactive lifestyle. Exercise can help manage chronic diseases and decrease your risk of stroke. Even making the choice to take the stairs rather than the elevator can positively impact your heart. The benefits of physical activity are endless.

### 2. Quit smoking

Not only does smoking harm your lungs, but it also damages your heart. Smoking doubles your risk of developing heart diseases. Even if you have smoked for years, it is not too late to reverse the damage. Within 20 minutes of quitting, your blood pressure will decrease and your heart rate will slow to a normal rate. Within 12 hours of quitting, your blood's carbon monoxide levels will return to normal. Within one year of quitting, your risk of heart disease is half that of a smoker. After five years of not smoking, your risk of stroke is the same as someone who has never smoked. After 15 years, your risk of heart disease is the same as someone who has never smoked. Better health is right around the corner.

#### Try this four-step way to kick out your habit:

- **On Day 1;** cut the number of cigarettes you smoke by half
- **On Day 3;** cut the number of cigarettes you smoke in half again
- **On Day 5;** cut your smoking in half again
- **On your Quit Day;** quit!

Keep your numbers in check.

### 3. Lose weight

Excess weight increases your risk of heart diseases, stroke and diabetes. To achieve steady, painless weight loss, take it easy. Each day, if you eat 200-300 calories less than you would normally consume and exercise at least 30 minutes on most or all days of the week, you'll get closer to your goal and be able to achieve weight loss that's steady and painless.

## References

1. 'Our History'. World Heart Federation. Retrieved 18 June 2018.
2. Snellen, HA (February 1980). 'Birth and growth of the European Society of Cardiology'. European Heart Journal.
3. 'World heart day 2014: salt reduction saves lives'. Central European Journal of Public Health. (3): 206. September 2014. PMID 25438401.

Losing weight is more than just diet and exercise. It's a personal journey that involves finding what you like and what works for you.

### 4. Eat heart-healthy foods

While there is no single healthy eating pattern for everyone, everyone can benefit from eating heart-healthy foods. A nutritious diet plays a part in managing cholesterol levels and weight. Certain foods are full of nutrients that are good for your heart, like antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids and potassium.

Eat heart-healthy foods to give your beat a boost.

### 5. Don't overeat

Although this advice primarily applies during the holidays, when deaths from heart attacks spike thanks to copious amounts of food and temptation, it's valid year-round. Eating a lot of food at once leads to:

- Blood shifting from the heart to the digestive system
- Faster and irregular heart rhythms, which can lead to a heart attack or heart failure

### 6. Don't stress

When you are under emotional stress, your body releases cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones make your heart beat faster and narrows your blood vessels to prepare your body for a fight or flight response. After dealing with the stressor, your body can rest and recover, but if you are continuously stressed, your body does not get that chance to recover. This negative reaction to stress can damage your artery walls and cause high blood pressure.

### Fun facts about the heart

- The heart is about the size of an adult fist
- It is the strongest muscle in the body
- It takes approximately 45 seconds for the heart to circulate blood all around the body
- The sound of your heartbeat is made by the 4 valves of the heart opening and closing as your blood flows
- Your heart beats about 100,000 times a day

**"It is never too late to start changing your lifestyle towards a healthier heart."**