



6 SURPRISING HABITS THAT CAN HURT YOUR HEART HEALTH

Some heart-healthy behaviours are obvious like getting regular exercise, eating your fruits and veggies and quitting smoking. But there are also some habits that are bad for your heart that may be a little less obvious.

1. YOU'RE GET ANGRY A LOT

We all see red sometimes but getting angry all the time takes a toll on your heart. Indeed, anger is one letter away from danger for your body.

Here's why: When you're angry, your nervous system goes into overdrive, and your body releases hormones that lead to elevated blood pressure and heart rate, putting added stress on the cardiovascular system.

In addition, stress hormones like cortisol can cause fluid retention (potentially leading to higher blood pressure and a greater risk of stroke), screw with your blood sugar levels and negatively affect sleep quality, all of which aren't good for your heart.

What's more, regular bouts of anger can also weaken your immune system, possibly leading to more infections. Adding to that, chronically angry people tend to have more anxiety and depression, which are linked to heart disease and a shorter lifespan.

Fix it: Don't let your emotions get the best of you. Learn how to calm down when you're angry and how to manage your feelings in healthy ways, whether it's through exercise, meditation, or therapy.

2. YOU'RE EXERCISING TOO MUCH

While exercise is essential for a healthy heart, there really can be too much of a good thing when it comes to working out. Overtraining can lead to hormone imbalances, reduced immunity, impaired metabolism, and excess cardiovascular system stress, among other things.

A November 2017 study in Mayo Clinic Proceedings found that people who exercised for 150 to 300 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous exercise per week — had higher odds of developing coronary artery calcification.

Fix it: Stick to the guidelines and give yourself enough rest between exercise sessions. For beginners, a good rule of thumb for most adults is a 48-hour recovery after a hard workout.

3. YOU'RE NOT FLOSSING ENOUGH

Neglecting your gums? Not a good idea.

Not flossing leads to inflammation and infection of the gums (gingivitis), which has been associated with an increased buildup of atherosclerotic plaque - hardening of the arteries. People with severe gum disease appear to have double the chance of developing high blood pressure, which translates into an increased risk of cardiovascular issues, according to a March 2021 study.

Need another reason to floss? Here are three: Regular flossing can also reduce respiratory illness, improve bad breath, and help manage diabetes.

Fix it: Take care of your teeth: Floss every night, brush twice daily and see your dentist for routine check-ups and cleanings.

4. YOU'RE SLEEPING TOO MUCH

While catching enough zzz's is crucial for your overall health, hitting the snooze button too often could be hindering your heart health. Oversleeping means that you have fewer total hours in the day that you are up and active.

A lack of physical activity can contribute to obesity, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and type 2 diabetes, which all increase the likelihood of developing heart disease.

What's worse, oversleeping was even associated with a greater risk of death, according to a May 2010 systematic review and meta-analysis in Sleep.

Fix it: Sleep quality trumps quantity. Adding that seven to nine hours of restful slumber per night is the sweet spot.

If you're still feeling tired, you might be dealing with an underlying medical condition like sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome. If that's the case, talk to your doctor, who can help make a diagnosis and steer you in the right direction for treatment.



5. YOU IGNORE YOUR SNORING

While you may dismiss your snoring as just an annoying habit, at times it can signal something more serious. Snoring can mean that you may have obstructive sleep apnea.

Sleep apnea is a disorder that causes abnormal breathing during sleep, and if left untreated, it can lead to a host of health problems. Specifically, because it affects the body's supply of oxygen, sleep apnea raises your risk for cardiovascular issues such as high blood pressure, heart attack, heart disease (specifically atrial fibrillation) and stroke, according to the Sleep Foundation.

Fix it: If you're a habitual snorer and common snoring remedies haven't worked for you, speak with your doctor, who may recommend an overnight sleep study to monitor and analyse your sleep. Understanding the root cause of your snoring can help determine the best course of treatment if you do have sleep apnea.

6. YOU'RE NOT SOCIAL

Isolation and loneliness can have a literal effect on your heart. People who aren't social tend to have higher rates of anxiety and depression, which often leads to unhealthy behaviors like oversleeping, smoking, poor diet, and lack of exercise. And we already know these habits can hamper your heart health.

Case in point: People without close relationships had a significantly increased risk of stroke and coronary heart disease, according to an April 2016 article in *Heart*.

Fix it: Stay connected with your family and friends. A little face time — even if it's just via Zoom — can do wonders to lift your spirits, help you cope with hard times and keep your heart healthy.

