

Are You at Risk for Heart Disease? Learn How to Fight Back

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**By Kathy Browning**

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Heart disease is a silent killer, According to the National Institutes of Health, it will kill nearly 500,000 people this year. If more Americans took control of their health, this statistic could be reduced by as much as 87%, that means 435,000 people would literally save their own lives each year.

Your lifestyle, diet, and environment subtly and profoundly affect your heart — by restoring or depleting over 30 essential nutrients. For optimum heart health, your body needs the correct balance of these 30 nutrients. In the context of a wholesome diet and healthy lifestyle, supplementation is the easiest, most effective way to promote maximum heart health.

A diet high in fats has been recognized as a primary villain and risk factor in cardiovascular disease. The difficulty many people have in understanding the risk of a high fat diet is not so much in the total fat but in the types of fat included in the diet. On the one hand there are two types of fats – one of which is good, one of which is bad. Saturated fats are one of the villains when it comes to the bad fat part of the formula and this type of fat is commonly found in almost all foods. Unsaturated fats are far less harmful. It is recognized that approximately 95 percent of the population is deficient in essential fatty acids.

Essential fatty acids are involved in energy production, the transfer of oxygen from the air to the bloodstream, and the manufacture of hemoglobin. They are also involved in growth, cell division and nerve function. Essential fatty acids are found in high concentrations in the brain and are essential for normal nerve impulse transmission and brain function.

Essential fatty acids are also involved in the manufacture of prostaglandins, substances which play a role in a number of body functions including hormone synthesis, immune function, regulation of the response to pain and inflammation, blood vessel constriction, and other heart and lung functions.

Symptoms of essential fatty acid deficiency may include fatigue, dry skin, immune weakness, gastrointestinal disorders, heart and circulatory problems, growth retardation, mental problems and sterility. It is likely that a lack of dietary essential fatty acids plays an important role in the development

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of many common diseases.

There are many types of essential fatty acid supplements available, including flaxseed oil, fish oils, evening primrose oil, black currant oil, and borage oil. These are available in capsule and free oil forms. Some experts advise avoiding fish oil supplements because they may have toxic contaminants. Fish oil supplements should not be taken during pregnancy due to the damaging effects of high doses of vitamin A.

Several risk factors have been linked to heart disease. These include unchangeable factors such as an early family history of heart disease. If a family member developed heart disease relatively young, before age 50, your risk is increased. Usually, however, heart disease is more likely to strike a woman after menopause.

Certain medical conditions play key roles. High blood pressure increases your risk of both heart attack and stroke, so controlling it is very important. Diabetes also increases your risk of developing heart disease, especially in women. Unfortunately, many diabetic women have a nerve disorder which makes them less sensitive to pain, so they might miss the heart attack warning sign of chest pain.

Keep in mind that lifestyle plays a crucial role. Smoking and fatal heart disease go hand-in-hand. If you smoke, quit. Oral contraceptives used by smokers might cause trouble too, so if you smoke and take the pill, you might be in greater danger of having a heart attack than someone who doesn't. Obesity and a sedentary "couch potato" outlook also add to your risk.

What counts is not how many risk factors you have, but what you do to change them. Maintain a lean weight and good blood cholesterol level. Cut the saturated fat content from your food and increase your intake of essential fatty acids. Eat less meat and chicken. Bulk up on vegetables and fruits. You'll be eating healthier and you will probably lose some weight!

Most importantly, exercise! This is critical to good health. Too often, we say we don't have time. Make time. Put yourself first and work out, even if you have to schedule it into your appointment book.

For years, we were told women didn't have to worry about heart disease. Now that we know the truth, we must all make the changes needed in the name of healthier and happier hearts.

Kathy Browning is a healing arts practitioner and wellness coach. She is also the Editor-In-Chief of "The Art of Living Well", an ezine focused on the mind, body, spirit connection and the author of "Feng Shui for Abundant Living". Be sure to visit <http://www.cancercomfort.com> for more information.

### **Are You At Risk For Having High Cholesterol?**

**By News Canada**

Take the cholesterol test to see if you have any risk factors

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(NC)—High cholesterol is a common medical condition, affecting approximately eight million Canadians. Since high cholesterol cannot be felt, many people do not fully understand the effect it can have on their arteries and heart. High cholesterol is a contributing factor for the development of heart disease.

1. If any of these apply to you, talk to your doctor about having your cholesterol tested: You are a woman over the age of 50. You are a man over the age of 40. You have heart disease (angina, heart attack, coronary bypass, stroke, angioplasty). You have diabetes. You have family history of heart disease or cholesterol (mother, father, sister, brother or grandparent).

2. If you have two or more of the following: You are overweight. You are physically inactive. You are a smoker. You have high blood pressure.

If you checked off one from the first list and two or more in the second list, you should ask your physician to have your cholesterol tested. Realistically, people may have more than just one risk factor. For example, someone who is physically inactive may also have high cholesterol in addition to high blood pressure. The combination of two or more risk factors multiplies the chances of developing heart disease, the number one killer of Canadians.

High cholesterol is one of the major modifiable risk factors of heart disease. It is possible to reduce cholesterol to a safe level with lifestyle changes and sometimes medication. Most importantly, for those who have diabetes or heart disease, lowering your cholesterol to target levels is crucial because of the increased risk for a cardiovascular event like a heart attack.

Do not be discouraged if you have identified more than one risk factor. For more information on cholesterol and its link to heart disease, please visit [www.makingtheconnection.ca](http://www.makingtheconnection.ca) or call toll-free 1-877-4-LOW-LDL (1-877-456-9535).

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Zeroing in on the Prevention of Heart Disease

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