



Love Your ♥ Heart...

February is American Heart Month, so show the Lord and your family you LOVE them by taking care of your heart. Heart disease kills nearly 930,000 people in the U.S. every year (43%), vs. cancer which claims 506,000 lives every year (23%). There are several factors to consider in making the risk of developing heart disease lower...

♥ **High Blood Pressure** - The new goal is to keep your blood pressure under 120/80, and when it starts to creep higher, look seriously at lifestyle changes to get it lower - exercise, better nutrition and stress reduction. High BP increases risks of heart attack, stroke, kidney failure and congestive heart failure.

♥ **Cigarette Smoke** - Smokers have more than double the risk of heart attacks than non-smokers do. Smoking is the #1 risk factor for peripheral vascular disease, which can lead to gangrene & foot amputation. STOP smoking before heart disease ruins your life.

♥ **Overweight** - Carrying extra weight strains the heart, which often correlates with poor nutrition, lack of exercise, high cholesterol and diabetes. Keep your BMI (body mass index) under 25 (only a few pounds separate each level of BMI, so losing a couple of pounds can drop your BMI by one point).

♥ **High cholesterol** - Total cholesterol levels should be kept below 200, HDL (happy J) above 60, and LDL (lousy L) below 130. Diet can help immensely in lowering your cholesterol, but often medications are needed at least initially until lifestyle changes kick in.

♥ **Lack of brisk exercise** - We should try to get in 30-60 minutes of brisk aerobic exercise several times a week, and low intensity exercise on other days. Doing this on a regular basis will help you sleep better, reduce stress, decrease your appetite and increase calories burned, thus aiding in weight loss.

♥ **Diabetes** - Uncontrolled diabetes greatly increases the risk of heart disease, and Type 2 diabetes is often caused by obesity. Diet and exercise can help prevent diabetes, and/or control it once diagnoses is made.

♥ **Stress** - Everyone deals with stress differently, but alcohol, smoking, and bingeing on unhealthy foods to relieve stress will certainly add to heart disease risk. Find healthy ways to reduce your stress level.

♥ **Genetics** - We can't change our genetic makeup, so if you have a family history of heart disease or diabetes, you MUST work even harder to decrease the risk factors you can control - weight, BP, cholesterol, diet, exercise, etc...

Bottom line for Heart Health ... 1. Stop smoking; 2. Lose Weight; 3. Keep your cholesterol and Blood Pressure within recommended guidelines; and 5. Reduce stress (spiritual reflections, including Bible reading and prayer, as well as exercise help this tremendously!)

Resources: HOPE publication #113-4 "The 7 best ways to help prevent HEART DISEASE"; www.webmd.com; www.hearthealthywomen.org; "Heart Disease - Get to the heart of the matter", by Healthwise, Boise, ID

♥ The Health & Healing Ministry will be providing healthy treats on Sunday, February 14! ♥



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