



10 Things You Never Knew about Heart Disease

- 1. Laughter is therapeutic.** Doctors from the University of Maryland School of Medicine found that watching a funny movie for even 15 minutes can increase your blood flow. Remember to laugh every day—it can keep your heart happy and healthy.
- 2. Heart disease is the leading cause of death of American women.** A recent survey found that fewer than one in five physicians knew that more women than men die each year from the disease. Be your own health advocate. Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure and blood cholesterol level.
- 3. Chest pain isn't the only warning sign of a heart at tack.** Symptoms for most heart attacks include mild chest pain, some shoulder discomfort, or shortness of breath. Other signs can be nausea, lightheadedness, or breaking out in a cold sweat. If you experience these symptoms, call 911. It could save your life.
- 4. Know your numbers.** If you're over 20, you should know your blood cholesterol number. If it's high, there are treatments (including medication and exercises) that can help. You should also get your blood pressure and your blood sugar levels checked regularly.
- 5. Less is more.** Researchers found that people tend to eat everything on their plate. Since maintaining a healthy weight is important for heart health, watch those calories! Measure out your servings and use smaller plates for automatic portion control.
- 6. Restaurant portions are getting larger—and so are we.** The average pasta portion 20 years ago was two cups. Today your plate is loaded with twice as much. Have an appetizer as your meal, share an entree, or ask the waiter to wrap up half of the meal to go.



- 7. Diabetes, a major risk factor for heart disease, is affected by what you eat.** Research has shown that eating more fruits, vegetables, and fiber can actually change the blood's sensitivity to insulin within as little as two weeks. So listen to what your mother told you and eat your veggies!
- 8. Walking can save your life.** A recent study found that a sedentary 40-year-old woman who begins walking briskly half an hour a day, four days a week, can enjoy almost the same low risk of heart attack as a woman who has exercised regularly her entire life. Start walking! Your heart will love you for it.
- 9. Even children can suffer from hypertension.** About five out of every 100 children have higher than normal blood pressure. Make sure to get your children's blood pressure checked when they visit their doctor.
- 10. Childhood obesity is becoming an epidemic.** The percentage of overweight children has increased substantially in the past two decades. Get your family off the couch and reduce the amount of time spent in front of computer and TV screens. Walking, biking, or playing active games are great ways to spend some quality time together.