



love your heart

Your complete guide to HEART HEALTH
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A healthy heart

The World Health Organization has said that cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and disability in the world, even though majority could have been prevented. In 2008, over 17 million people died from cardiovascular disease, and this number is set to rise to 23 million by 2030. The idea that heart disease is a first-world country disease is no longer the case, as the most of the deaths from cardiovascular disease take place in low-middle income countries, such as South Africa.

Although heart disease can run in families, there are many risk factors that are within your control. In fact, unhealthy lifestyle choices are responsible for about 80% of heart disease and stroke cases. These unhealthy behaviours include smoking, excessive alcohol intake, stress, a poor diet and sedentary living. By taking simple steps to quit or avoid smoking, limiting your alcohol and reducing your stress level, along with switching your diet to one that is high in unprocessed high fibre, low-salt

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foods, and maintaining a regular exercise routine of at least 30 minutes a day, can help your heart muscle be strong, fit and healthy.

Regular screenings for high blood pressure, weight and cholesterol can also help protect your heart, as being forewarned, is being forearmed to do something about it before it's too late.

Discovery Vitality aims to help people enhance and protect their lives with incentives for buying healthy food, gym membership discounts and various assessments, screenings and information about maintaining a healthy heart, managing stress levels and ideas to improve eating habits. Your heart pumps the blood around your entire body. It's a wonderfully powerful and immensely sophisticated muscle which deserves respect, care and kindness with a healthy and active lifestyle.

Dr Craig Nossel

Head of Wellness, Discovery Vitality

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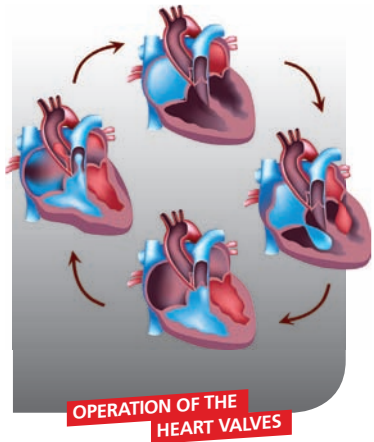
Heart in CRISES

Your heart has an important job. It is responsible for pumping blood around your body, delivering oxygen and energy to your cells, while helping to recycle blood that contains carbon dioxide and other toxins. It's your job to look after it ...

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Structurally, your heart consists of four chambers where blood enters and leaves this pump. The oxygenated blood rapidly leaves from the left side via the arteries, and returns more slowly to the right side of the heart via the veins. It is directed to your lungs, where it “picks up” more oxygen before flowing through to the heart and back out to the arteries. Simple and effective. Until that pump wears down, falters and needs repair.

The statistics say it all. According to the South African Heart Association, heart disease is the No 1 killer in South Africa. One in three men and one in four women will have a heart condition before the age of 60. Lifestyle factors such as lack of exercise, stress, smoking and an unhealthy diet can lead to conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Untreated, this may result in heart disease.



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While many people have the perception that cardiovascular disease is a disease of the elderly, more than half the deaths caused by cardiovascular disease occur before the age of 65. And one in every 20 people under the age of 40 is already showing signs of heart disease. Dr Tsidi Gule, a medical doctor in private practice, explains that there has been an increase within the last two decades,

- CVD results in the death of 200 people in SA daily.
- Around 130 heart attacks and 240 strokes occur daily in SA.
- For every woman who dies of CVD, two men will die.
- 6,3 million South Africans are currently living with high blood pressure.

Source:

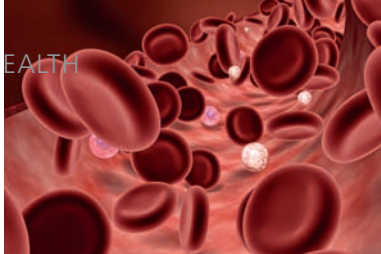
THINKRED.CO.ZA

in high blood pressure, high cholesterol and heart disease in the age groups 24-35, and she has seen this in her own patients. "This signifies the impact lifestyle plays on overall health and the onset of chronic diseases."

Even more alarming, it has been predicted that premature cardiovascular disease-related deaths in the working population (those aged between 35 and 64) are expected to increase by 41% by 2030.

According to Dr Vash Mungal-Singh, CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA (HSFSA), "Coronary vascular disease (CVD) is now one of the biggest single killer diseases worldwide. Over 17,5 million deaths are caused by CVD every year, and it is projected that this figure will rise to 20 million by 2020 and 24 million by 2030."

HSFSA, together with Unilever, has launched a new



awareness campaign and website, Thinkred.co.za. The message is simple: this silent disease will have a significant impact on society and the economy if urgent steps are not taken to prevent it. And those steps start with you. Between 1997 and 2004, 195 South Africans died each day from some form of CVD. Of these, around 33 a day were due to heart attacks, 60 due to strokes and 37 due to heart failure.

And thinking that it is the men who are mainly at risk of heart disease is outdated, as women are considered to be equally at risk. *The Interhart Study* (a Canadian-led global study) found that the only difference between men and women in terms of their risk is that women tend to experience the symptoms and consequences nine to 10 years later than men.

Globally, 8,6 million women die from heart disease each

year, accounting for a third of all deaths in women. Put into context, one in 35 women is at risk of developing breast cancer, which makes it almost nine times more important for women, in particular, to check the health of their heart.

The reason, say the experts, is simple. Dr Leslie Anne Saxon is a professor of medicine, clinical scholar and chief of cardiovascular medicine in the Cardiovascular and Thoracic Institute at the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine, as well as livestrong.com's chief medical advisor. One of her main areas of focus is women's health. She explains that women, in general, tend to underestimate their health concerns, as they are the caretakers of the family. She was quoted as saying:

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"We take care of our children, our husbands, our households, and never stop to take care of ourselves. We need to be more aware of our stress and diets, and the importance of regular checkups."



**NOT ONLY MEN AND
THE ELDERLY ARE AT RISK**

The symptoms for men and women differ quite significantly, but the problem is that, worldwide, there hasn't been a female-centric approach towards heart health. Around 70% of the research conducted on heart health in the US has been on men.

Plus, warns Saxon, as a woman, your heart health changes at every stage of your life – from your childbearing and pre-menopausal years to your menopausal and post-menopausal years.

For both men and women, there are nine modifiable risk factors for heart disease. This means that these factors can be improved or reversed by the lifestyle choices you make. Of these, high blood pressure, diabetes, lack of physical exercise and excessive alcohol intake are believed to affect women more than men. Of equal risk to both are factors including smoking, abdominal obesity, abnormal lipids, diet

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and psychosocial factors such as stress.

According to a study conducted by the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation, women under the age of 55 fare worse than men following a heart attack, and their health declines more than that of their male counterparts in the following months. The *AM155* study found that women (between the ages of 20 and 55) had more physical limitations, more chest pain and a lower quality of life than men in the month following their heart attack.

Dr Karin Humphries, Heart and Stroke Foundation professor in Women's Cardiovascular Health at the University of British Columbia, says: "While the high prevalence of traditional cardiac risk factors like diabetes, smoking and high blood pressure contribute, they do not fully explain the poorer

outcome in women. This is why our study focuses on exploring non-traditional risk factors such as depression, anxiety and social support."

The researchers believe that, potentially, the reason why women are not recovering as easily is that they are not as likely as their male counterparts to get the support they need when recovering. "Women are less likely to attend cardiac rehabilitation than their male counterparts, even when they are referred. We need to help women overcome their barriers to this essential part of their recovery."

Humphries and her team believe that women often tend to delay going to hospital, are less likely to believe that they are, in fact, having a heart attack, are more likely to put off seeking treatment and often ignore or under-report their symptoms. "Additionally, they are less aggressively investigated for heart disease."

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Two men die for every woman who dies of a heart attack. Yet only one in two women and one in four men diagnosed with high blood

pressure – a major indicator of heart disease – know that they have blood-pressure problems. We can no longer afford to be complacent.

Women's health:

As a woman, you should be taking a 360-degree approach to your heart health. Symptoms of cardiovascular disease tend to occur around 10 years later in women than in men. Research conducted by the National Institute of Health (NIH) has found that women will most commonly experience new or different physical symptoms for a month or more before experiencing an actual heart attack. The symptoms most commonly reported are unusual fatigue, sleep disturbance and shortness of breath.

However, one of the biggest differences between the symptoms experienced by men and women is that many women never have chest pains. Less than 30% of women report having any chest pains or discomfort prior to their attacks. And increasing evidence is mounting that a woman's symptoms are not as predictable as those of a man.

Warning signs that are often overlooked

- Unusual tiredness
- Sleep disturbance
- Shortness of breath



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- Indigestion
- Anxiety

Major symptoms experienced during a heart attack include:

- Shortness of breath
- Weakness
- Unusual fatigue
- Cold sweats
- Dizziness
- Heart palpitations (a flip-flop feeling in your chest)
- A faster heartbeat
- Nausea
- Pain radiating down the arm

Should you experience any or all of these symptoms, contact your doctor immediately.

Cardiovascular disease and menopause:

According to the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) based in Bethesda, US, in your 20s and 30s, oestrogen helps to maintain adequate levels of “good” high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, which helps to protect your body’s cardiovascular health. Oestrogen is also beneficial in relaxing the smooth muscles

of your arteries, which helps to keep your blood pressure within normal levels.

So it makes sense that as you age, and your oestrogen levels decline, your risk of cardiovascular disease will increase. As you head into menopause, the reduced level of oestrogen results in changes to the walls of the blood vessels, which in turn may cause plaque and blood clots to form. Add to this the changes in the level of lipids (fats) in the blood: levels of low-density lipoproteins (the harmful LDL) increase and the levels of HDL (the good kind) decrease. This can lead to the build-up of fat and cholesterol that contributes to heart attack or stroke.

Reduced levels of oestrogen also result in an increase in fibrinogen, a substance in the blood that helps your blood to clot. Increased levels of blood fibrinogen are also related to cardiovascular disease and stroke.

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When men and women have a heart attack, a clot in the artery blocks the flow of blood to the heart and the heart muscle begins to die. The more time that passes without treatment, the greater the chance of damage, as this tissue cannot grow back. However, the good news is that clot-busting medications and other artery-opening treatments not only can stop a heart attack in its tracks, but can limit, or even prevent, damage to the heart. The faster the treatment, the more effective. Ideally, treatment needs to be given within the first hour of the start of heart-attack symptoms.

Men's health:

Heart attacks aren't always as sudden or as intense as depicted on television. The reality is that, often, heart attacks start as a mild discomfort in the centre of the chest. This discomfort may even come and go, however the pain becomes more intense as the attack progresses.

Signs to look out for:

- Chest pain
- Discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Impending sense of doom

Should you experience any or all of these symptoms, contact your doctor immediately.



Know your NUMBERS

Although there are many misconceptions about heart disease, the biggest is that most heart attacks, heart failure and other chronic diseases occur only in middle-aged and older people. This is not true, says Krisela Steyn, the Associate Director of the Chronic Diseases Initiative in Africa, in a report for the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA (HSFSA). "The influences of risk factors can start before birth and will have an impact throughout life."

And, warns Ayesha Seedat, a registered dietician with HSFSA: *"Your health numbers are important information that helps you assess your risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) – by knowing them you can reduce your chances of developing CVD or of having a second attack."*

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

DECODING THE TERMS

What you need to know:

Cholesterol is a type of fat (called a lipid) that is found in your blood. It's useful in helping your body function properly, but if there's too much of it in your blood, it can build up in the walls of your arteries, narrowing your arteries and increasing your risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

Avoid foods rich in cholesterol and high in trans fats, such as fatty red meat, butter, full-cream dairy, as well as processed fats as found in deep-fried foods.

Include foods that naturally lower cholesterol, such as olive oil, fatty fish such as salmon, oat bran, lentils and beans, avocado, nuts and seeds.

Blood Pressure is a measure of how hard your heart has to work to pump blood around your body. There are many factors that affect this; for instance, if you have a lot of fat building up in your artery walls, they can stiffen and narrow so the heart has to work harder to pump

blood through your narrower arteries.

Avoid salty foods that may increase blood pressure such as added salt to food, crisps, savoury biscuits, pickled foods, biltong, soup powders and savoury sauces (including soya sauce).

Include herbs and spices, rather than using salt to flavour food. Opt for unsalted nuts and make fresh soups from scratch.

Blood glucose levels are usually kept within a narrow range by the interplay of many factors, the most important of which is insulin, which works by stimulating your cells to sponge up excess sugar out of your bloodstream.

Healthy target is 5mmol/l for a normal fasting blood sugar level, however, anything between 4mmol/l and 6mmol/l is considered acceptable. Anything higher is considered a risk factor.

Weight assessment

measurements help you determine whether you are of normal weight, overweight or obese. To

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

measure your BMI, you need to take your weight (in kilograms) and divide it by your height (in metres squared). "Above 25 is considered overweight placing one at increased risk for disease while 30 and above is considered obese, placing one at high risk for disease. Waist circumference is the measurement around your natural waist (just above the belly button) and can be used to determine disease risk." adds Seedat.

According to the HSFSa,

all adults from the age of 18 should have their blood pressure, cholesterol, weight and waist circumference measured annually. Blood sugar testing should be done every three years from the age of 45 (if there are no risk factors present). However, adults who are overweight, and have other CVD risk factors present, should be tested earlier (at any age) and more frequently. If these measures are raised, they should be checked more often until they are under control.

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR NUMBERS?

	IDEAL	WHEN TO WORRY	WHEN TO MEASURE
Blood glucose levels			
Fasting blood sugar	4-6mmol/l	Over 7mmol/l	Every year
Haemoglobin A1c	Under 7%	Over 8%	Every 3 to 6 months (if diabetic)
Cholesterol			Every year
Total cholesterol	Under 5mmol/l	5mmol/l or higher	
HDL cholesterol	Over 1,2mmol/l	lower than 1,2mmol/l	
LDL cholesterol	Under 3mmol/l	Over 3mmol/l	
Blood pressure			Every year
Systolic	Under 120 mm Hg	140mm Hg or higher	
Diastolic	Under 80 mm Hg	90 mm Hg or higher	
Body measurements			At every physical exam
Body mass index	Under 25 kg/m	30 kg/m or higher	

Source: http://www.vitalstudy.org/images/Vital_numbers2.pdf



Vitality members

Learn more about your health by doing a Vitality Check

The Vitality Check is a range of four quick health checks at a pharmacy in the Wellness Network, or at your company's Wellness Day, to help you identify possible health dangers early and determine your risk for certain lifestyle-related chronic diseases.

The tests are blood glucose, blood pressure, cholesterol and a weight assessment. Together, these tests determine your risk for diseases like hypertension, type-2 diabetes, high cholesterol and obesity. You can earn Vitality points for doing the Vitality Check.

Make an appointment

Places where you can complete the Vitality Check

1. At a pharmacy in the Vitality Wellness Network. You'll find a list of pharmacies registered on the Vitality Wellness Network online at www.discovery.co.za or by calling 0860 99 88 77.
2. At a Discovery Wellness Day.
3. At a Discovery Wellness Centre (through your Financial Adviser).
4. By a registered doctor.

If you complete a Vitality Check at a Vitality Wellness Network pharmacy, a Discovery Wellness Day or Discovery Wellness Centre, your results will be submitted automatically. If you complete a Vitality Check at a GP or other authentic test facilities we need you to send us your official results by emailing us on claimvitalitypoints@discovery.co.za or by faxing us on (011) 539 7347.

If you are a member of Discovery Health, the R125 cost of the

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Vitality Check will be covered once a year from your Screening and Prevention Benefit, without using the available day-to-day benefits on your plan, provided that you have the full bundle of tests done all at the same appointment. If you do not have all the screening tests at the same appointment, you will have to pay for the tests you have later (if you have a Discovery Health Plan with a Medical Savings Account and enough funds, you can claim these costs from the Medical Savings Account).

If you are a Discovery Life policyholder, you will need to pay for the Vitality Check yourself. Bankmed members must refer to their scheme rules which can be accessed by calling 0860 110 833.

What you need to take with you

Your Discovery membership card.

Your identity document.

The fee for the Vitality Check – if you are not part of Discovery Health or a scheme that we administer.

Earn Vitality points

The main member, spouse and adult dependants (aged 18 years and older) can have the Vitality Check and earn points.

YOU CAN EARN VITALITY BONUS POINTS FOR EACH TEST IF YOUR RESULTS ARE IN THE HEALTHY GOAL RANGE.			
	Vitality points	Goal range	Bonus points
Weight assessment	1 000	Body Mass Index (BMI) between 18,5 and 24,9	4 000
Blood pressure	500	Reading of 140mmHg/90mmHG or less	2 500
Random Glucose	500	Reading of less than 7,8 mmol/l	2 500
Total Cholesterol	500	Reading of less than 5 mmol/l	2 500

mend your BROKEN HEART



Did you know that you can literally die of a broken heart? Research has found that high levels of emotional stress, particularly that of grief, can lead to your immune system being compromised, which in turn can make you more vulnerable to infection. Immunologists at the University of Birmingham have found that increased stress levels and depression can interfere with the function of the type of white blood cells known as neutrophils, which are responsible for fighting off infections. The research group, lead by Professor Janet Lord, also found that those who had suffered a major loss had high levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Cortisol, the primary stress hormone, increases sugars (glucose) in the bloodstream, enhances your brain's use of glucose and increases

STRESS AND YOUR HEART

the availability of substances that repair tissues. When you are healthy, you produce a hormone, called DHEAS, which can help counteract the pressure on your white blood cells, and allow your immune system to function normally. However, as you age, so the levels of this hormone decreases and you become more vulnerable.

Andrew Cate, an Australian-based personal trainer with a focus on health, and the author of *Healthy Heart for Life*, adds that stress can have a “dramatic influence” on your heart health. “If you are unhappy with your job, your relationship, your children, your finances, your relatives, your neighbours or there are any other worries that dominate your thinking, it’s hard to prioritise health.”

He explains that the stress hormones adrenalin and cortisol are released, triggering changes that are designed to help your body in that “fight or flight” situation. “Your heart rate and blood pressure are increased as

more blood and nutrients are delivered to your muscles. Your blood becomes more sticky and prone to clots as the body prepares for possible injury, while blood fats and sugar are released to provide fuel. These changes are ideal when we are stressed during exercise or in a life-threatening situation. But when you are fairly inactive and these stresses occur over the long term, your risk of heart disease increases.”

Plus, when you are stressed, you are more likely to lean on your crutch, and often that is a negative influence on your health – such as comfort eating, smoking or alcohol. Cate explains that a study published in the *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* found that during periods of high stress, people tend to eat less healthy foods, drank more high-caffeine drinks and slept less. All of which puts pressure on your heart. Plus, a study published in the journal of *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology* and quoted by

STRESS AND YOUR HEART

Cate, reveals that anxiety may accelerate the development of atherosclerosis and place you at a higher risk of heart disease or

even a heart attack.

However management of your stressors can help improve your heart health. Here's how:

10 HEALTHY HABITS TO BEAT STRESS

- 1. Socialise with family and friends. Feeling stressed or down, call, email or visit with a friend or family member and share your concerns, feelings and hopes.*
- 2. Engage in daily physical activity. Regular physical activity relieves mental and physical tension. Physically active adults have lower risk of depression and loss of mental functioning. Try walking, running, swimming or biking every day.*
- 3. Accept the things you cannot change. But don't say that you are too old to learn. Try to learn something new every day and share this with someone else.*
- 4. Remember to laugh. Laughter truly is the best medicine and has been proven to boost your feel-good hormones and lower your stress hormones.*
- 5. Give up the bad habits. Too much fatty, sugary foods, alcohol, cigarettes or caffeine can increase your stress levels, rather than calming them.*
- 6. Slow down. In today's rushed society, this may seem impossible— but remember it was the tortoise that won the race, not the hare.*
- 7. Get enough sleep. Try to get six to eight hours a night and you need this to quieten your mind and wake refreshed.*
- 8. Get organised. Write “to do” lists, not only does this help focus you on your most important tasks, but it really does calm the mind. Plus you feel a sense of accomplishment when you cross off a task you have done.*
- 9. Pay it forward. Volunteer your time or return a favor to a friend. Helping others helps you.*
- 10. Try not to worry. The world won't end if your kitchen isn't cleaned or if you buy rather than bake those cupcakes for your child's school. There are some things you may need to do, but it doesn't mean that right now, this minute is the time. Step back and take a deep breath. You can do it.*

STRESS AND YOUR HEART

EMERGENCY STRESS STOPPERS:

- *Count to 10 before you speak.*
- *Take three to five deep breaths.*
- *Walk away from the stressful situation and say you'll handle it later.*
- *Go for a walk.*
- *Don't be afraid to say "I'm sorry" if you make a mistake.*
- *Set your watch five to 10 minutes ahead to avoid the stress of being late.*
- *Break down big problems into smaller parts.*
- *Drive in the slow lane or avoid busy roads to help you stay calm while driving.*
- *Hug a loved one, smile at stranger or listen to classical music.*

CONTROL YOUR STRESS:

<i>I will practice using positive self talk at least once a day.</i>	Yes	No	Maybe
<i>I will remember to use emergency stress stoppers when I face stressful situations</i>	Yes	No	Maybe
<i>I will spend at least 15 minutes every day finding pleasure in something that I enjoy.</i>	Yes	No	Maybe
<i>I will practice daily relaxation, such as deep breathing or another relaxation technique.</i>	Yes	No	Maybe
<i>I will add one of the 10 healthy habits to my life this week.</i>	Yes	No	Maybe
<i>The habit is: _____.</i>	Yes	No	Maybe

How many "Yes" answers do you have?

3 or more That's terrific!

1 or 2 Good! Work on these habits for a week, then take the quiz again.

0 Don't worry. You can create your own goal. Think of stress management techniques that work for you.

Bust those VICES

Did you know that compared with non-smokers, smoking is estimated to increase your risk of coronary heart disease and stroke by two to four times?

Not only that, smoking is directly linked to coronary heart disease. It causes reduced circulation by narrowing the blood vessels (arteries) and puts you at risk of developing peripheral vascular disease.

So, how many cigarettes a day are considered safe? The real answer: none. Just one cigarette can increase your heart rate by 20 to 25 beats a minute; it then takes six hours after that one cigarette for your circulation to return to normal. Did you know that a life-time habit of two packs a day shorten your lifespan by up to 16 years!

In 2003, the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, regulated the tobacco advertising and saw it banned in 168 countries; it is a established fact that smoking almost triples the risk of heart diseases. By narrowing blood vessels and expanding blood clots, "smoking causes the cardiovascular equivalent of a traffic jam on the highway to your heart and brain," explains Dr Vash Mungal-Singh, CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa.

According to the experts, nicotine and carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke damage the inner lining of the arteries, and provide soil for plaque and arteriosclerosis to develop. The arteries nourish the heart and have a

SMOKING AND YOUR HEART

relative small diameter, the heart reacts sensitively to changes: lower blood flow to the heart and less pump activity can result in chest pain (angina pectoris) or even heart attack.

Dr Mungal-Singh insists: "One absolute rule is no tobacco, no amount of tobacco is safe; even second-hand tobacco smoke exposure increases your risk."

The Centres for Disease Control in the US, report that second-hand (environmental) smoke affects around 126 million people, who are put at risk for heart disease.

In addition, a new problem termed "third-hand smoke" has been recently investigated; cigarette smoke-generated carcinogens lodge in clothing, carpets, drapes and other materials and can be absorbed through human skin, especially that of children and infants.

According to the American Heart Association, nicotine addiction is one of the hardest to break; nicotine releases the neurotransmitters of dopamine, responsible for relaxation, euphoria and addiction. Due to this "feel-good" factor, the cigarette has become an integral part of your emotional support system and will become even more entrenched in your life.

However, Your body has an amazing capacity for restoration and healing. Within 24 hours of being tobacco-free, your chances of having a heart attack have already decreased.

Within 48 hours you are able to breathe easier, and within two to three months, your circulation has improved, lung capacity is increased by 30% and you have more energy. By a year smoke free – your risk of a heart attack is 50% less than that of your still-smoking counterpart.

HOW TO QUIT:

Allen Carr's *Easy Ways to Stop Smoking* gives an interesting step-by-step guide to quitting smoking. (www.allencarr.co.za). Carr has created clinics and programmes based on the principle that "smokers do not smoke for the reasons they shouldn't smoke; they smoke for the reasons that

they do smoke." Carr discovered that it's not a lack of willpower that makes it difficult to stop smoking, but a conflict of will. His method removes this conflict so that you don't have to use willpower to stop. Once you understand how the smoking trap works, then by following a few precise and simple

instructions, the physical withdrawal becomes easy to manage.

Alternatively there is the **Smokenders** (www.smokenders.co.za) series of seminars that provide you with "personal technology necessary for easy stopping." Smokenders has been around for more than three decades in South Africa. Its main focus is to assist individuals in becoming non-smokers without withdrawal symptoms and the programme consists of seven weekly two-hour meetings.

According to the *Quit* booklet produced by www.againstsmoking.co.za, you will need to plan your survival kit. This may include finding a substitute for your cigarettes. "If you need to put something in your mouth, try sugar-free chewing gum, a straw, toothpicks, or carrot sticks." Secondly, keep your hands busy; play with a pencil or worry beads, or a piece of elastic on your wrist.

According to www.againstsmoking.co.za there are five steps to quitting smoking:

- 1 Think about why you should quit.
- 2 Decide to quit.
- 3 Set a quit date and prepare to stop.
- 4 Stop smoking.
- 5 Stay free – do not go back to tobacco.



DISCOVERY VITALITY'S TIPS:



- 1 That new pair of shoes you've been eyeing may well be yours if you use the money you save from quitting cigarettes or alcohol to buy them. Not only will you look great, but you'll feel motivated to keep on your quit programme!
- 2 Smoke through your wallet. If you're going out to socialise, take a set number of cigarettes with to help you stick to your limit, or don't take any and offer to pay other people R5 or R10 per cigarette – controlling smoking by making it very expensive.
- 3 Breathe easy – exercise not only strengthens your heart and lungs which have been weakened by smoking, but it also improves your mood and keeps you distracted from thinking about cigarettes.
- 4 Make a list of the reasons you want to cut back and carry this around with you. When you have an urge to light up, look at the list.
- 5 Commit to quit. Choose a specific date to quit or cut down on alcohol or cigarettes, and tell all your friends and family so they can support you.
- 6 Now that you have decided to quit, visit www.discovery.co.za and sign the non-smoker's declaration. You can earn up to 5 000 Vitality points after three months of being a non-smoker. You can earn these points once in your lifetime.

You need to decide whether you are going to use medicines or not, as these can help reduce withdrawal symptoms. Speak to your doctor or pharmacist regarding what will work best for you. There are alternatives, such as **Nicorette** gums in 2mg and 4mg format (www.nicorette.co.za), or even the **Beyond Nicotine** 15 Day Quit Smoking Kit (Beyondnicotine.com). Ultimately, there is no miracle cure – you need to decide that you want to quit and will need to put in the effort. Your heart will thank you!

ALCOHOL AND YOUR HEART

Smoking is one obvious risk factor leading to heart disease, but did you know that excessive **consumption of alcohol** is also dangerous?

While studies have shown that alcohol consumption (in particular red wine) can be good for your heart, this needs to be in moderation. Dr Bauer Sumpio, professor and section chief of vascular surgery in the Department of Surgery, Yale School of Medicine, and his team of experts found that **polyphenols** found in fruits, olive oil, bee pollen, green tea, chocolate and red wine, are antioxidants that help slow cell deterioration and the anti-aging process, and seem to have a protective element against heart disease.

Regarding red wine, Mungal-Singh says: "**Resveratrol**, found in grape skins, may increase HDL, known also as 'good' cholesterol, and prevent platelets in the blood from sticking together and may also reduce LDL, 'bad' cholesterol, oxidation – a process that causes damage and narrowing of arteries. **Flavonoids** also found in red wine and fruits may provide antioxidant properties and may help prevent blood cholesterol deposits in arteries." The maximum consumption of alcohol per day should be two drinks for men, one

drink for women; one drink being equal to 120ml wine, 340ml beer or 25ml of spirits or liqueur.

Dr Philip Rüther notes: "Whether it is the beverage itself or the calming, relaxing, parasympathetic effects of moderate alcohol consumption that helps you relax is uncertain and differs depending on the individuals."

It should be noted that regular consumption could put your health at risk; high blood pressure, blood clots can lead to a heart failure and moderation is key.

Andrew Cate, author of *Healthy*

Heart for Life, says it is difficult to quantify a safe amount of alcohol to drink, because there are many variables to consider, including weight, gender, speed of consumption, the type of alcohol you are drinking, what you are eating while drinking and your age.

"In middle-aged and older adults, consuming one or two alcoholic drinks a day is associated with a lower risk of heart disease compared to non-drinkers." However, warns Cate, it is important to recognise that **diet** and **exercise** play a much greater role in preventing heart disease.

Discovery Vitality: When painting the town red, order a mineral or soda water with your alcoholic drink, or opt for a spritzer, shandy or half pint to halve your alcohol intake.



Eat for your HEART

A well-balanced diet
is essential for living
a full, strong life ...

Certain foods are more potent than others when it comes to ensuring your heart stays in peak condition. “The rising rate of cardiovascular disease is linked to the typical Western diet and lifestyle – heavy on salt, sugar and unhealthy fats,” says Candice Smith, Discovery Vitality’s registered dietician. As developing societies become more westernised, these bad habits spread across the globe, increasing the health risk to populations for whom heart disease was never a major concern. Smith explains that adjusting our diet and lifestyle choices can significantly lower the risk of cardiovascular disease.

The cholesterol that builds up in our blood vessels is affected by our diet, says Smith.

She adds that the biggest culprit is a diet heavy in trans fatty acids, found in many processed foods.

These include fast food, commercially baked biscuits and brick margarines. When there’s an excess of cholesterol in the blood, it is deposited in the arteries that lead to the heart, resulting in a dangerously restricted blood flow.

By including the following foods in your diet, you can

help your heart to function at its peak.

Olives, avocado and olive oil

Foods rich in monounsaturated fatty acids and vitamin E have been proven to lower “bad” low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and increase “good” high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol. “Have one tablespoon of olive oil a day over salads or use in cooking. Add olives to your salads or have a few olives as a snack on the run,” suggests registered dietician Celynn Erasmus.

Legumes

Legumes include dry, cooked or canned beans, lentils and peas. Legumes are high in fibre, naturally low in fat and don't contain any cholesterol. They are slow-releasing, making them low-GI, explains Erasmus. Try and eat legumes at least three to four times a week. You can add lentils to mince; chickpeas to salads; have beans on toast or add split lentils to stews and casseroles.

Fat-free dairy

When consumed in large amounts in its whole-fat state, milk and dairy products can contribute to heart disease by raising blood cholesterol levels, obesity and some types of cancer, explains Erasmus. Choose fat-free dairy products as much as possible. Once the fat has been removed from a dairy product, the added advantage is that this is then lower in cholesterol.

Cocoa

Research has shown that the flavonoids, called polyphenols, found in cocoa can help with lowering risk for heart disease by reducing inflammation. Keep in mind that even though dark chocolate has certain health benefits, it still contains saturated fat and should be eaten in small amounts.



Nuts

"Nuts contain several bioactive constituents which may improve cardiometabolic health and for this reason it is a good idea to include nuts in your daily diet," says registered dietician Claire Julsing Strydom from Nutritional Solutions. Don't forget that this heart-healthy food can pack quite the kilojoule punch, so moderation is key. A good guideline to follow is to have just a small handful at a time, such as nine pistachio nuts or five cashew nuts.



Eat healthier and enjoy the rewards with Discovery Vitality:

You can get up to 25% cash back on thousands of HealthyFood™ products at Pick n Pay, thanks to Discovery Vitality. Just activate your HealthyFood™ benefit by visiting the website and you can get up to 25% cash back on all healthy foods you purchase by simply making better food choices and swiping your HealthyFood™ card. (If you have a Visa DiscoveryCard, it doubles up as your HealthyFood™ card) The HealthyFood™ is a range of products including vegetables, fruit, high-fibre carbohydrates, proteins, dairy products, lentils and legumes, and healthy fats and oils that can help prevent lifestyle-related chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers. So, you can enjoy a variety of HealthyFood™ items for better health and you'll get great savings too. You automatically qualify for cash back of up to 10% on HealthyFood™ when you activate the benefit. To increase your cash back up to 25%, you simply need to visit www.discovery.co.za, click on "Discovery Vitality", "Know your health", and complete the Personal Health Review. You can also activate your HealthyFood™ benefit by scanning the QR Code to your smartphone or by visiting www.vitalityhealthyliving.mobi from your cell phone.



Keep it real with whole grains

A whole grain is a cereal grain which has an intact germ, endosperm and husk, such as oats, brown rice, quinoa, millet and bulgur wheat. The dietary fibre content of these foods has been found to lower cholesterol – use the American Dietary Guideline recommendation of consuming at least half of all grains as whole grains.

Spice of life

Garlic, ginger and turmeric are really dynamite foods in small packages. They not only add big flavour, but big nutritional value too. Use these dynamite foods as much as possible in your food preparation. “Using spices and fresh herbs also helps us to use less salt,” says Erasmus. A high sodium intake is linked with elevated blood pressure, and high blood pressure is accountable for two out of three strokes and half of all cardiovascular heart disease, explains Strydom.

Antioxidant-rich fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are packed with vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients and antioxidants, helping to lower cholesterol and protect the heart. Two groups are particularly useful, namely those fruits and vegetables that are rich in vitamin C or beta-carotene, advises Erasmus. “The antioxidants in fruit and vegetables help to protect our body against free radicals that can lead to premature aging,” adds registered dietician Jade Campbell of Nutritional Solutions, who also suggests eating a variety of colours and at least five servings a day.

Sterol and stanol intake

Sterols and stanols are plant phytochemicals which are found in foods such as corn, soy, wheat, peanut oil and fortified foods. “These compounds may bolster the benefits of a heart-healthy diet by lowering serum cholesterol, which reduces the risk of heart disease,” says Strydom.

Soluble fibre in oats and oatbran

Oats and oat bran have a high soluble fibre content, which can actively lower blood cholesterol levels. "Oats contain beta glucan which reduces serum cholesterol levels," says Campbell. Try adding some oatbran to smoothies, or have a bowl of oats (not instant) every day to keep your cholesterol in check.

Fatty Fish

Researchers have discovered that people who eat fish rich in omega-3 three or more times a week are less likely to suffer from heart disease and high blood pressure. "It restores the balance of the omega-3:6 ratio, which can lead to dramatic health benefits, especially reducing atherosclerosis, as well as regulating blood pressure and reducing inflammation, which will improve

cardiovascular disease risk," says Campbell. The best fish sources of omega-3 fatty acids are fatty fish such as salmon, fresh tuna, trout and sardines, although eating any type of unfried or unbattered fish will benefit your heart. But what if you are not a fish fan? "If you choose not to eat fish, taking a good omega-3 supplement will suffice, as long as it provides about 1000mg of EPA and DHA," suggests Erasmus.

A typical heart-friendly day may look like this...

- **BREAKFAST:** A bowl of cooked oats with grated apple, cinnamon and a handful of almonds.
- **SNACK:** Fresh fruit of choice and a small low-fat or fat-free yoghurt.
- **LUNCH:** A selection of crudités and a slice of rye bread with lower fat dip such as tzatziki or cottage cheese.
- **SNACK:** A few whole grain crackers with hummus and a fresh fruit of choice.
- **DINNER:** Grilled salmon or pilchard fish cakes and roasted vegetables. Served with a large mixed green salad with oil-free dressing and an optional glass of red wine.

HEART HEALTHY *Eating* PLAN

Meal plan

DAY 1

DAY 2

BREAKFAST

1/2 Milk Unit /1 Protein Unit

Thinly Shaved Chicken & whole grain mustard on Corn Thins

Citrus Smoothie

3 - 4 slices Thinly Shaved Chicken (40g)

1/2 Cup Fat Free Vanilla Yoghurt (125ml)

2 Starch Units

3 Corn Thins topped with Whole Grain Mustard & Chicken

1 Medium Orange (150g)

1 Fruit Unit

1 Orange

1/2 Cup Fruit Juice Blended Together with the Orange, Yoghurt & a Few Cubes Ice

SNACK

1 Fruit Unit

3/4 Cup Raspberries (140g)

1 Medium Peach (180g)

LUNCH

Lunch on the run

Smoked Peppered Mackerel Salad

2 Protein Units

6 - 8 Sticks Lean Ostrich Biltong (90g)

1 Medium Fillet Smoked Peppered Mackerel, Shredded (120g)

1 Starch Unit

3 Provitas

1 Cup Whole Kernel Corn (180g)

2 Fat Units

1/2 Small Avocado Pear (60g) Mashed onto Provitas

2 Tbs. Flaked Roasted Almonds (added to salad)

Vegetables

Vegetable Crudités: sliced cucumber, baby carrots and snap peas

Add the mackerel, corn & almonds, mixed lettuce leaves, assorted peppers, radishes and fresh tomatoes.

SNACK

1 Fruit Unit

1 Cup Chopped Pawpaw (150g)

2 Medium Dates (30g)

1/2 Milk Unit /1 Protein Unit

1/2 Cup Fat Free Yoghurt (125ml)

1 Skinny Cappuccino made with 1/2 Cup Low-fat Milk (125ml)

DINNER

3 Protein Units

Grilled Fish Foil Parcels
1 Large Fillet of Hake (140g) & Cannellini Beans (70g), placed into middle of a foil square. Top the fish with sliced tomatoes, sliced mushrooms, fresh parsley and crushed Garlic. Drizzle with oil and a splash of white wine. Fold over the foil to form a parcel & grill for 20 mins or until fish flakes easily

Meal in a minute: Chicken Stir-fry

1 Medium Chicken Breast (120g), sliced and stir-fried with vegetables. Use low sodium soy sauce, garlic and coriander for seasoning

1 Starch Unit

1 Grilled Corn on the Cob (90g)

1/2 Cup Cooked Noodles (65g)

2 Fat Units

2 tsp Olive Oil
Serve the Grilled Fish & Vegetables on pumpkin puree (steamed pumpkin, puréed with hand held blender)

2 tsp. sesame seed oil
Mixed Stir-Fried Vegetables : spinach, cabbage, peppers, mushrooms, carrots, baby marrows etc

Max. 4 FATS / DAY 1 Monounsaturated fat = 1 tsp. Olive oil, 5 Olives, 1/4 Avocado, 1 tsp. Canola Oil, 1 tsp. margarine

HEART HEALTHY *Eating* PLAN

DAY 3

Banana & Cinnamon Oats

½ Cup Low Fat Milk (125ml)
1 Cup Cooked Oats with Banana & Cinnamon added
1 Small Banana (90g), sliced into oats

9 Litchis (120g)

Sliced Gherkin & Egg Mayo Sandwich

2 Jumbo Eggs (150g), boiled and mashed with Low-Fat Mayo (2 Tbs.)
2 Slices Whole Wheat High Fibre Toast (60g)
2 Tbs. Low Fat Mayo

Thinly Sliced Gherkins and Shredded Lettuce Added to Sandwich

16 Medium Cherries (85g)

½ Cup Low Fat Milk (125ml)

Baked Wasabi Trout with Mixed Veg

1 Medium Fillet Trout (120g), 1 tsp. wasabi paste rubbed over the salmon

½ Cup Cooked Brown Rice (80g)

2 tsp. Olive Oil
Steamed baby marrows, patty pans, and baby gems

DAY 4

Mixed Berry Muesli & Vanilla Yoghurt

½ Cup Fat-Free Vanilla Yoghurt (125ml)
Low Fat & Low Sugar Muesli (50g)
¾ Cup Mixed Fresh Berries (140g), combined with the muesli & yoghurt

1 Crown Watermelon (200g)

Baked Potato with Chickpeas, Cottage Cheese and Sweet Chili Sauce

Fat-Free Cottage Cheese (80g), Chickpeas (140g) and a S squirt of Sweet Chili Sauce
1 Medium Baked Potato (180g) topped with the chickpeas and cottage cheese
2 tsp. Olive oil over salad

Cucumber, celery, flat-leaf parsley, red pepper, finely chopped as a side salad

1/2 Medium Mango (110g), sliced into yoghurt

Fat-Free Plain Yoghurt (175ml)

Ginger, Garlic & Chili Chicken Breasts

1 Medium Chicken Breast (120g). Slice the chicken breast through the middle so it flaps open. Bash it with a meat tenderiser. Rub with olive oil, ginger, chili, garlic, lemon juice and zest. Dry fry in a non-stick pan

3 Rounds Sweet Potato, Roasted (90g)

2 tsp. Olive oil for marinating chicken
Crisp lettuce, gherkins, tomatoes, cucumber and sliced onion

DAY 5

Baked Beans on Toast

Baked Beans (70g), Chopped Tomatoes, Coriander & Chili
1 Slice Low GI Toast (60g)
1 Medium Apple (120g)

2 Pieces Dried Pear (30g)

Tuna Pasta Salad

1 Tin Tuna (100g) and ½ Cup Low-Fat Plain Yoghurt mixed with 1 Tbs. Low-Fat Mayo
1 Cup Cooked Pasta Bows (130g), combined with the tunamixture.
5 Olives Added to Pasta Salad, 1 Tbs. Low Fat Mayo (used above)

Tomatoes, Lettuce, Chopped Cucumbers and Thinly Sliced Red Onion mixed with the above

¾ Cup Blueberries (140g)

Hot Chocolate with ½ Cup (125ml) low fat milk, 1 tsp. cocoa powder and sucralose based sweetener

Bulgur Wheat, Lentil & Roast Butternut Salad

Lentils (140g) (drained & rinsed), ½ Round Feta (30g)

½ Cup Cooked Bulgur Wheat (65g)

5 Pitted Olives & 9 Pistachio Nuts
Roast Butternut tossed with lentils, olives, nuts, feta, rocket leaves and sundried tomatoes, olives and nuts

Red Wine - 1 Unit red wine was planned for three days

HEART HEALTHY *Eating* PLAN

Meal plan

DAY 6

DAY 7

BREAKFAST		
	Mashed Chili & Coriander Pilchards on Crackers	Soft Boiled Egg with Chili Bovril on Toast
1/2 Milk Unit /1 Protein Unit	1 Medium Pilchard (40g), Mashed with Coriander & Chili	1 Large Egg (50g), Soft Boiled served on the Rye Toast
2 Starch Units	6 Provitas	2 Slices Rye Toast (60g) spread with Chili Bovril
1 Fruit Unit	1 Small Banana (90g) Sliced onto Cereal	1 Cup Chopped Pawpaw
SNACK		
1 Fruit Unit	3 Slices Pineapple (160g)	10 Strawberries (250g)
LUNCH		
	Eating Out Option	Spaghetti Bolognaise
2 Protein Units	1 Medium Portion Dry-Grilled Calamari Tubes (150g), with Freshly Squeezed Lemon Juice	6-8 Tbs. Lean Mince (90g)
1 Starch Unit	1 Cup Cooked Basmati Rice (160g)	1 Cup Cooked Wholewheat Pasta (130g)
2 Fat Units	(Used with Cooking)	2 tsp. Olive oil used for cooking
Vegetables	Steamed Vegetables/large salad as available from restaurant	Add sautéed onions, garlic, tomatoes, basil leaves, grated baby marrows mushrooms.
SNACK		
1 Fruit Unit	1 Small Banana (90g)	7 Rings Dried Apple (50g)
1/2 Milk Unit /1 Protein Unit	1/2 Cup Fat Free Yoghurt (125ml)	2 - 3 Sticks Ostrich Biltong (30g)
DINNER		
	Roast Veg and Garlic Omelette	Dry-fried Lemony Fish
3 Protein Units	2 Large Eggs (100g) beaten with 1/4 Cup Low-Fat Milk and made into an omelette. Fill the Omelette with the grilled vegetables & 1/2 Tbs. Parmesan Cheese (15g)	1 Large Fillet of Hake (140g), Fried in non-stick pan with olive oil (2 tsp.) and the juice and zest of a lemon. 2 Tbs. Humus for potatoes
1 Starch Unit	1 Slice High Fibre Whole Wheat Toast (30g)	3 Baby Potatoes, boiled (90g), and tossed with 2 Tbs. Humus
2 Fat Units	1 tsp. olive oil (omelette) and 1 tsp. Canola oil	2 tsp. Olive oil
Vegetables	Mixed Vegetables roughly chopped and grilled for 25 minutes with chopped rosemary and 1 tsp. Canola oil & Garlic. Serve the Omelette with steamed spinach & carrots	Serve the fish with a large green salad made up of mixed lettuce leaves, snap peas, blanched asparagus spears & thinly sliced fennel bulb

YOUR SHOPPING *checklist*

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thinly shaved chicken | <input type="checkbox"/> Baby marrow | <input type="checkbox"/> Rye bread |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chicken breasts | <input type="checkbox"/> Patty pans | <input type="checkbox"/> Wild rice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calamari tubes | <input type="checkbox"/> Baby gem squash | <input type="checkbox"/> Bulgar wheat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra Lean mince | <input type="checkbox"/> Pumpkin | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholewheat pasta |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peppered mackerel | <input type="checkbox"/> Fennel bulbs | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholewheat Pasta bows |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trout fillets | <input type="checkbox"/> Asparagus spears | <input type="checkbox"/> Noodles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hake fillets | <input type="checkbox"/> Baby potatoes | <input type="checkbox"/> Basmati rice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calamari tubes | <input type="checkbox"/> Rocket | <input type="checkbox"/> Oats |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eggs | <input type="checkbox"/> Spinach | <input type="checkbox"/> Muesli |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fat-free vanilla yoghurt | <input type="checkbox"/> Rosemary | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fat-free plain yoghurt | <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh parsley | <input type="checkbox"/> Pistachio nuts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low-fat milk | <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh coriander | <input type="checkbox"/> Flaked almonds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fat-free cottage cheese | <input type="checkbox"/> Onion | <input type="checkbox"/> Dried apple |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parmesan cheese | <input type="checkbox"/> Ginger | <input type="checkbox"/> Dried pear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feta cheese | <input type="checkbox"/> Chili | <input type="checkbox"/> Ostrich biltong sticks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canola margarine | <input type="checkbox"/> Lemons | <input type="checkbox"/> Tinned pilchards |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Crushed garlic | <input type="checkbox"/> Tinned tuna |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Humus | <input type="checkbox"/> Cannellini beans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avocado | <input type="checkbox"/> Cherries | <input type="checkbox"/> Baked beans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cucumber | <input type="checkbox"/> Strawberries | <input type="checkbox"/> Chickpeas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baby carrots | <input type="checkbox"/> Raspberries | <input type="checkbox"/> Chili Bovril |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sugar snap peas | <input type="checkbox"/> Blueberries | <input type="checkbox"/> Cinnamon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lettuce | <input type="checkbox"/> Blackberries | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red, green and yellow peppers | <input type="checkbox"/> Litchis | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet chili sauce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Radishes | <input type="checkbox"/> Mangoes | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholegrain mustard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basil | <input type="checkbox"/> Watermelon | <input type="checkbox"/> Low-fat mayonnaise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rosa tomatoes | <input type="checkbox"/> Peaches | <input type="checkbox"/> Wasabi paste |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Italian tomatoes | <input type="checkbox"/> Oranges | <input type="checkbox"/> Pickled gerkins |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Butternut | <input type="checkbox"/> Pawpaw | <input type="checkbox"/> Olive oil |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mushrooms | <input type="checkbox"/> Dates | <input type="checkbox"/> Sesame oil |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen corn | <input type="checkbox"/> Pineapple | <input type="checkbox"/> Canola oil |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corn on the cob | <input type="checkbox"/> Apples | <input type="checkbox"/> Low sodium soy sauce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet potato | <input type="checkbox"/> Banana | <input type="checkbox"/> Cinnamon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spinach | <input type="checkbox"/> Corn thinns | <input type="checkbox"/> Cocoa powder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cabbage | <input type="checkbox"/> Provitas | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholewheat bread | |



Exercise for your *Heart*

Your heart is a muscle, and as such, needs to be treated as one. Research reveals that inactivity is one of the major risk factors for heart disease. The good news is that exercise, not only improves your overall heart health, but can even reverse some of your risk factors! The stronger your heart is, the better it can pump that life-giving blood through your system. Discovery Vitality fitness expert, Dr Jill Borresen offers the following advice:

Experts agree that of the three risk factors (smoking, poor nutritional habits and a lack of physical activity), physical inactivity is the most common.

Exercise and your health

A host of scientific studies have proven that regular exercise can prevent or delay the onset of cardiovascular disease. Exercise improves the function of the heart and blood vessels, and can also improve body weight, decrease fat stores and increase metabolism. All this lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease later in life.

Physical activity also helps to lower cholesterol levels, improve

insulin sensitivity and reduce blood pressure, which in turn, reduces the risk or helps to manage high cholesterol, type-2 diabetes and hypertension. But to get all these health benefits, you've got to get moving – and commit to keeping up a healthy level of physical activity for the long-term.

Where to start:

Let's begin by stating the obvious: the health benefits you gain from physical activity are dependent on how often you exercise, how long you keep it up, and the intensity of your

workout. Visit your doctor for a medical check up and guidance on the right programme for you, starting off slow is not an option – it's compulsory. But your ultimate goal should be to increase the frequency, duration and intensity of your exercise sessions over time.

Here are some general guidelines related to exercise and cardiovascular disease prevention:

- Healthy adults aged 18 to 65 should perform moderate-intensity aerobic (endurance) activity for a minimum of 30 minutes, five days a week or vigorous aerobic activity for a minimum of 20 minutes three days a week.
- Moderate aerobic activity increases the heart rate, but should still leave you able to talk while exercising. Vigorous-intensity activity, on the other hand, causes rapid breathing and a significant increase in heart rate, e.g. power walking and jogging.

- Combinations of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity are fine! Try walking briskly for 30 minutes twice a week and jogging for 20 minutes on two other days, for example.
- In addition to aerobic exercise, every adult should do resistance training – activities that improve muscular strength, at least two days each week.
- Protect yourself from injury and increase your range of motion by warming up before exercising and by stretching carefully after exercising.
- Don't rest on your laurels! To stay fit and keep the risk of chronic disease low as you shape up, your exercise programme should steadily increase in its level of difficulty.

Safe start

We've already mentioned the importance of getting a medical assessment before starting any exercise programme. This is especially important for men

over the age of 45, women over the age of 55; or anyone who smokes, has a family history of heart disease, diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure, or anyone who is obese.

Pregnant women, and those still recovering from illness or injury, should also seek medical advice.

Join the club ... of life!

Getting in shape doesn't mean signing up for expensive classes, or creating a drastic change in your lifestyle. There are plenty of ways to work physical activity into your daily schedule, whether it's taking a 20-minute walk during your lunch break, choosing the stairs over the elevator, or remembering to "engage" your abdominal muscles while sitting at the computer.

But best of all, physical activity is an opportunity to get together with friends and family and have fun. Meet in the park to ride

bikes, toss a Frisbee, or enjoy a game of touch rugby. You have nothing to lose but your sedentary lifestyle – and maybe a few kilos. And in terms of your long-term health, you have everything to gain!

Managing heart disease

Exercise, as part of a comprehensive rehabilitation programme, can reduce cardiac symptoms, stabilise or even reverse clogging of the arteries, and reduce the risk of future cardiac events. This "secondary prevention" has been shown to reduce death rates by 26% in cardiac patients.

Furthermore, physical activity



FITNESS

can improve mobility and recovery time, giving cardiac patients the positive outlook and physical strength they need to enjoy life to its fullest. Regular exercise gives the compromised heart the help it needs to return to proper function and support daily activities. Among its other effects, exercise:

- Lowers total cholesterol and raises HDL-cholesterol
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces clotting, and improves the body's response to existing blood clots
- Reduces incidence of irregular heartbeat (arrhythmias)
- Improves insulin function (a factor in diabetes)

- Contributes to weight management

- Improves mood

However, every heart patient is different. Depending on age, general level of fitness, and the nature of the event or risk condition, rehab professionals will create an individualised programme designed to safely raise your level of cardiac function. But no matter who they're working with, rehabilitation experts agree: exercise is what puts cardiac patients on the road to recovery, not bed rest.

Building a healthier future is a partnership between recovering cardiac patients, and the





Discovery Vitality tips:

1. Move it, move it! Experts say 150 minutes of moderate exercise every week can strengthen your heart.
2. Buff up with resistance training in between your aerobic workouts, aim to do one set of 8 to 12 repetitions of each resistance exercise.
3. If you are over 55, have a family history of heart disease or high blood pressure, get the all-clear stamp of approval from your doctor before starting an exercise programme.
4. Keep it social! Physical activity is a great opportunity to hang out with your friends or family and have fun. Meet in the park to ride bikes, toss a frisbee or enjoy a game of touch football.
5. Organise to meet like-minded friends at the gym, join a walking club or sign up for club rugby or soccer.
6. You can get Vitality points for being active at the wide range of Vitality fitness partners. Visit www.discovery.co.za.

doctors, pharmacists, dieticians, physiotherapists and other healthcare professionals who have the tools and know-how to help patients adjust their health habits for the better.

Out of all the things you can do to promote heart health, getting physically active stands out, and

for a simple reason: people with heart disease who are physically fit live longer and have fewer heart attacks than those heart patients who are not physically fit.

Listen to your heart – and adopt the medically-supervised exercise programme that will keep it beating for years to come!

FITNESS



Beginners 5km road running programme

DAY	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Monday	6 x (2 min run, 2 min walk.)	6 x (3 min run, 2 min walk.)	3x (5 min run, 2 min walk, 3 min run, 2 min walk.)	3x (6 min run, 2 min walk, 4 min run, 2 min walk.)
Tuesday	Strength training.	Strength training.	Strength training.	Strength training.
Wednesday	6 x (2 min run, 2 min walk.)	5 x (4 min run, 2 min walk.)	3x (5 min run, 2 min walk, 3 min run, 2 min walk.)	2x (8 min run, 2 min walk, 3 min run, 2 min walk.)
Thursday	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
Friday	5 x (3 min run, 2 min walk.)	5 x (4 min run, 2 min walk.)	3x (6 min run, 2 min walk, 3 min run, 2 min walk.)	Easy pace 2,5km jog.
Saturday	Strength training plus light cross training, optional	Strength training plus light cross training optional	Strength training plus light cross training optional	Strength training plus light cross training, optional.
Sunday	Brisk 30 min walk.	Brisk 35 min walk.	Brisk 40 min walk.	Brisk 45 min walk.

GUIDELINES:

- Walk – Keep up a brisk pace in all walking sections of the programme.
- Jog – Run at a slow, very easy pace.
- Run – Don't worry about your speed at all. You need to feel comfortable enough to conduct a slightly breathless conversation.
- Easy – Comfortable pace, where conversation with running partner is easy.

FITNESS

Remember to always get medical clearance before starting on ANY exercise programme.

- Start with a 5-10 minute brisk walk to warm-up before every session and end with a 5-10 minute brisk walk to cool-down after every session.
- After cooling-down, take the time to do some stretching.

Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
2x (10 min run, 2 min walk, 3 min run, 2 min walk.)	2x (15 min run, 2 min walk.)	20 min run, 2 min walk, 15 min run, 2 min walk.	Easy pace 4.5km jog.
Strength training.	Strength training	Strength training	Strength training.
2x (10 min run, 2 min walk, 3 min run, 2 min walk.)	2x (10 min run, 2 min walk, 3 min run, 2 min walk.)	2x (15 min run, 2 min walk.)	Rest
Rest	Rest	Rest	Easy pace 20 min jog.
Easy pace 3km jog.	Easy pace 3,5km jog.	Easy pace 4km jog.	Rest
Strength training plus light cross training, optional.	Strength training plus light cross training, optional.	Strength training plus light cross training, optional.	Easy pace 15 min jog.
Brisk 50 min walk.	Brisk 55 min walk.	Brisk 40 min walk.	5km RACE.

- Strength train – It's not essential for you to finish the 5km distance, but it has tremendous benefits both for your running and your health.
- Cross train – Not essential, but makes your programme more balanced.
- Rest – This is a vital part of your training and is in fact the time when your muscles increase in strength.



Love your heart...

For Brandon Fairweather, the message of the importance of heart health is a personal one. This is his story:

The epidemic of heart disease can only increase as people continue to neglect what can only be described as the single most important muscle in their bodies. Barring any birth defects, terminal illnesses or any other extreme circumstances, living your best possible life largely depends on your lifestyle and the choices you make on a day-to-day basis.

For me, this is a topic close to home. I underwent heart surgery in September last year – at the ripe age of 28.

I was born with a heart condition (from a faulty, aka bicuspid, aortic valve). I've always strived to lead a healthy, active lifestyle and as a complete sports nut, regular exercise for me often included cricket, soccer, mountain-biking and a few gym sessions a week. Regardless of these efforts, heart surgery became inevitable.

Leading up to the operation, my doctors established that the “stenosis” on the problematic valve had narrowed more aggressively, meaning a poorer blood flow and extra strain on my heart. Luckily for me, surgery could correct this and I made the tough decision to have the valve and aorta replacement surgery sooner rather than later. My story may be one of a congenital condition, but the outcome, if you don't look after your heart, is much the same.



THE PROCESS

Within a week, I found myself on the table. A needle went in, and my next memory was being woken the following day with tubes being pulled from deep down my throat, and nurses telling me to cough as I tried to gain some valuable air.

This was followed by a very blurry few days in ICU. It felt like there were wires connected in every direction. I had two drips, a catheter and two drains just below my ribs (which was the most uncomfortable part). Then there was the tiny wire

attached through my chest to my heart, just in case I would need to be reconnected to a pacemaker at any stage.

Between the circulation stocking, the chest guard (which looked like a man-bra), and a less-than-masculine hospital gown, I almost almost asked my doctor what surgical procedure he had actually performed! Jokes aside, these are essential to your recovery.

Expect early-morning wake-ups as you adjust to this “new” version of yourself. I had to learn how to walk and breathe independently again,

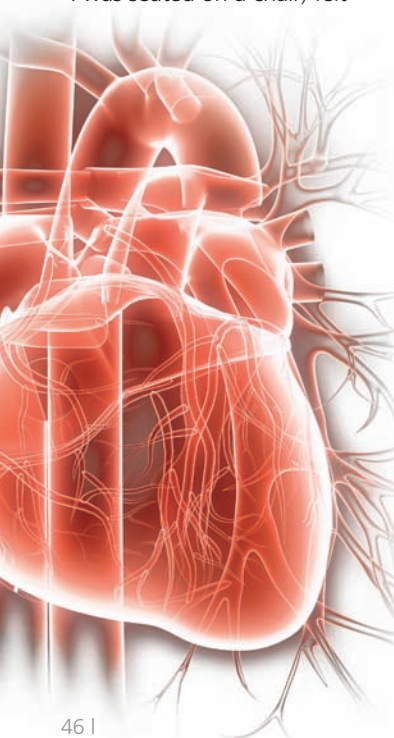
and underwent rehab two to three times a day. I spent five nights in total in ICU before I was transferred to a general ward.

Four days in, and my first independent shower (okay, so I was seated on a chair) felt

like an ocean of happiness being poured on my battered body. The first one is always the hardest – and is made harder if you drop the soap, like I did. However, that small achievement held such reward for me, as I slid that bar, clutched in my monkey-like toes up the side of the shower, only to drop it before it reached my straining hand. I did finally get that soap!

Moving to a general ward is a massive milestone. Besides the 5am wake-up call for blood tests, the remaining days in there are more exciting, as you regain appetite and get to see spouse, family and friends more often and in greater numbers, which was my real reward of every day. My strength slowly increased, with walking going from 5m to nearly 100m a day as I progressed quite rapidly, at least initially.

Your breathing improves, and it was one of the most beautiful sensations as



I physically felt my lungs expand with each breath – larger and deeper each day that passed.

However, the greater, and scarier, milestone was the day I was discharged.

I had spent nine days in hospital, and that first day out was as exciting as it was disorientating.

You can expect a few anxieties and discomforts within the first week, but don't worry about this. Every new twitch, niggle or skipped breath is not the onset of a further heart attack.

Following your discharge, it's about six weeks off work and you can't drive during this time.

It is recommended that you don't fly for three months after a heart procedure.

The hospital will give you all the information you need, including a very comprehensive, but cautious, rehab programme.

I began with 300m of walking a day, slowly

increasing to 3km a day over a 10-week period. I was able to resume normal exercise at about four months, but this does depend on your own circumstances.

Heart surgery, in any form, is certainly a life-impacting experience. While I was well looked-after, and fortunate enough to enjoy a smooth operation and recovery, nobody would ever choose to go through this process unnecessarily. This is why taking the necessary steps to protect your heart health and avoid heart surgery is so important. Mine may have been a congenital heart condition, but the outcome is the same.

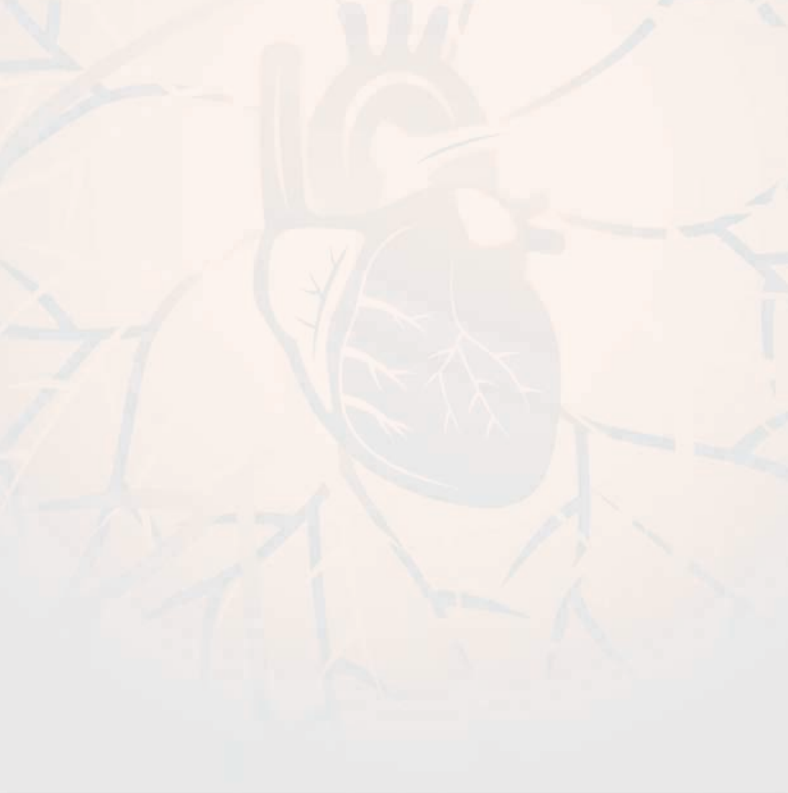
Your heart health is largely dependent on your lifestyle choices.

Choose to eat healthier, exercise more and not indulge in those vices that are damaging to your heart. Choose to protect your heart; because it is your greatest treasure.

*"There's nothing more inspiring
than the complexity and beauty
of the human heart."*



– Cynthia Hand





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