



Four Things You May Not Know About Heart Health

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OK we get it. Diet, exercise, and healthy lifestyle choices are the best ways to take care of your heart. So instead of reading another article on eating your veggies, limiting sugar and alcohol, and exercising daily, here are four things you may not know about heart health.

1. Electrolytes and the Heart

The heart is an incredible muscle that sends its own organized electrical signals which tell the heart to contract in an efficient way. Without getting too in-depth on this, the electrolytes in your bloodstream and in your cells such as Sodium, Potassium, Calcium, Magnesium, and Chloride play a big role in this and therefore, electrolyte imbalances can impact both your heart and nerve function. Your kidneys play a big role in balancing these electrolyte levels, but kidney problems, certain medications, electrolyte intake, illness, and water intake can have an impact on these levels. Weakness and fatigue are common symptoms of electrolyte imbalances.

2. Salt and the Heart

Most people have been told to limit salt intake to decrease cardiac risk, but why? The answer lies in simple osmosis. Water likes to follow salt, wherever it goes. So, if you're eating more salt that's getting digested into the bloodstream, you increase the amount of fluid in your bloodstream. This can increase your blood pressure and put stress on the heart. Too much pressure can cause fluid to build up in the lungs and extremities causing shortness of breath and chest pain/pressure.

3. Coenzyme Q10 and Cholesterol

Cholesterol is important and is necessary for making vitamins, hormones, and supporting other bodily functions. Too much cholesterol can cause plaque to build up on the walls of the arteries, which is why cholesterol-level testing is commonly used to assess the risk of heart disease. Coenzyme Q10 is an enzyme that is naturally produced by your body, but levels decrease as you age. There are many dietary sources for CoQ10, but most foods do not contain enough of this enzyme to raise CoQ10 levels. According to a 2022 study titled "Effects of Coenzyme Q10 Supplementation on Lipid Profiles in Adults: A Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials" (Published by the Oxford University Press on behalf of the Endocrine Society) CoQ10 was found to be helpful in lowering LDL and Total Cholesterol levels. CoQ10 may have interactions with other drugs including blood thinners, so consult with your doctor before taking any supplements.

4. Apolipoprotein B-100 Blood Tests

There are many blood tests that are used to evaluate for the risk of heart disease. Lipid panels and Triglyceride counts are common lab tests that are ordered by doctors for their patients to assess risk for heart disease and coronary artery disease. Apolipoprotein B-100 testing is another test that evaluates risk for heart disease. According to the Cleveland Clinic, Apo-B is a lipoprotein that "carries substances in your blood that help make plaque." It never hurts to consult with your doctor about adding this test into your lab work.

As always, consult with your doctor before taking any new medications or making lifestyle changes that may come with adverse risks. Call 9-1-1 if you are experiencing symptoms that include but are not limited to: chest pain, shortness of breath or dizziness.