

HEART DISEASE

MYTHS & FACTS

7 MYTHS ABOUT HEART DISEASE

Before exploring the myths it's important to recognize the indisputable facts.

- Heart disease is America's #1 killer. More than 610,000 men and women die from this disease annually.
- Almost 50 percent of Americans are in jeopardy of developing heart disease. They include those who smoke, have high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- Heart disease is more deadly than cancer.

The good news? You can reduce your risks by committing to a heart-healthy lifestyle.

1

If you pass a cardiac stress test a heart attack is unlikely.

It's unlikely, but not impossible. The test is a good screening tool. However, about **8 out of 10 patients with significant coronary artery disease will fail** and may need further testing. Cardiac catheterization is a more comprehensive procedure that detects disease of the heart muscle, valves and arteries.

WHAT TO DO: Get a thorough evaluation from your primary care physician to determine your risk. Share family history of heart disease; speak up if you are having symptoms; and be truthful about risky behaviors like smoking and eating an unhealthy diet. If at risk, you may be referred to a cardiologist.

2

Heart disease only affects elderly people.

It is not just an "old" person's disease. About **one third of Americans who die of heart disease each year are under age 75**. The cause? Plaque buildup. Accumulating as early as childhood, plaque clogs arteries and may eventually block blood flow to the heart.

WHAT TO DO: Adapt healthy habits early on. Eat a heart-healthy diet, exercise regularly, avoid stress, maintain a healthy weight and don't smoke.

Diabetes won't cause heart disease if you take your medication.

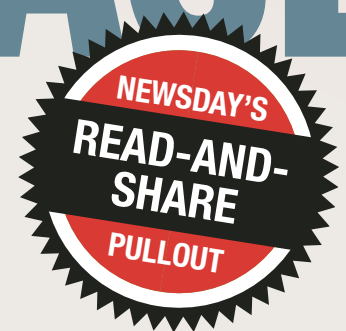
Taking diabetes medication regularly will reduce your risk, but will not completely prevent heart disease. **Diabetes increases your risk** because often other risk factors, such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure are also present.

WHAT TO DO: Manage your diabetes by maintaining healthy blood sugar levels (high levels damage the heart muscle). Don't smoke (diabetes and smoking narrows blood vessels). Control blood pressure (high blood pressure forces the heart to work harder to pump blood).

3

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At the heart of health



If you have heart disease you need to take it easy.

Wrong. **Exercise is key to heart health**. Some benefits: Lowers blood pressure by mimicking beta-blocker medication to slow heart rate. Spurs weight loss, in turn, taking stress off the heart. Reduces chronic inflammation which helps improve conditions related to heart disease.

WHAT TO DO: Before exercising, get examined by your doctor if you are experiencing chest pain or other symptoms. Then, start small. Take the stairs instead of the elevator; spend part of your lunch hour walking; wear a fitness tracker to encourage increased activity.

4

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Heart disease is a man's disease.

Symptoms may vary, but heart disease kills men and women. It is the **#1 killer of women, claiming 1 in 3 lives annually**. In fact, heart disease strikes more women than men. Sixty-four percent of women who have died from a sudden heart attack had no prior symptoms.

WHAT TO DO: Know the signs. Men often experience chest pain with a heart attack. Women are more likely to have symptoms like shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, jaw pain and extreme fatigue.

6

I already live a healthy style, so I'm probably not at risk.

You may believe you live a heart-healthy lifestyle, but unless you practice at least four recommended behaviors for heart health, **you may be at risk**. In fact, only three percent of Americans consistently abide by these heart-healthy rules.

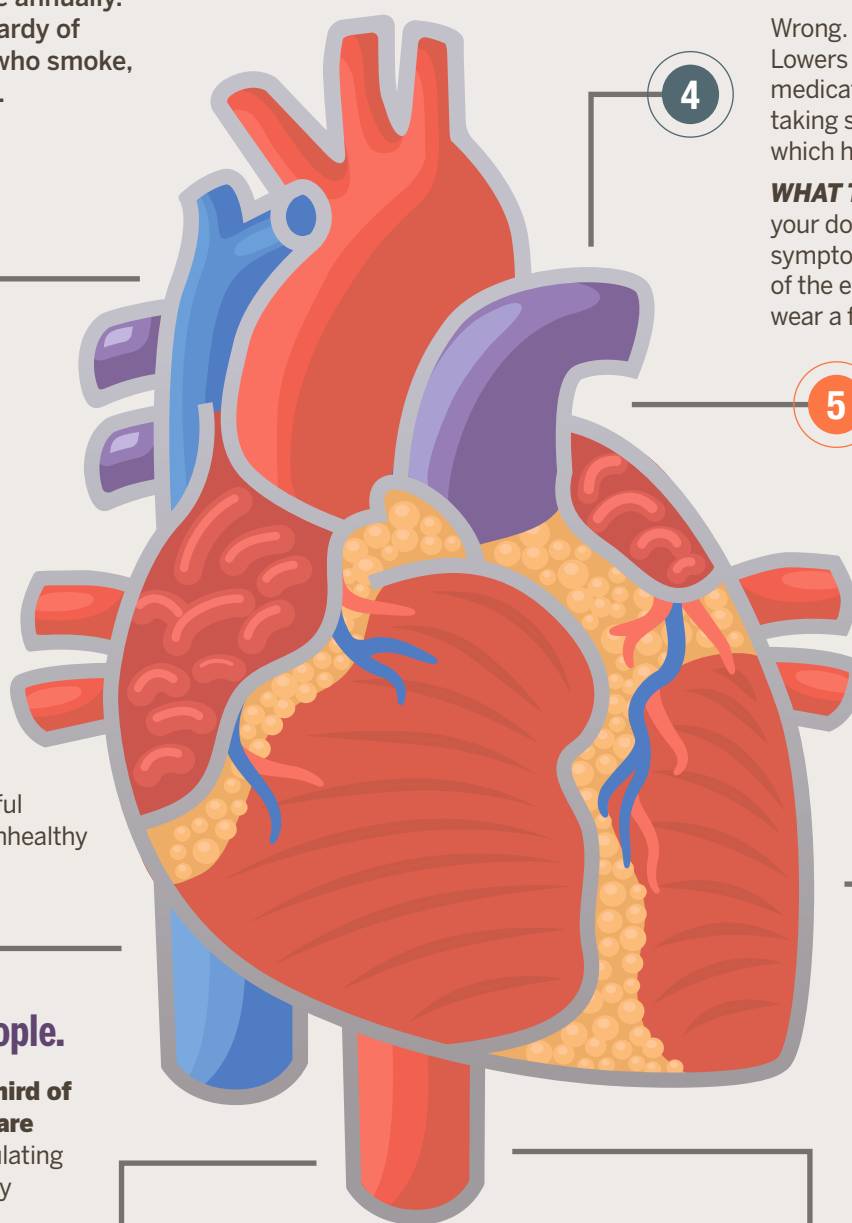
WHAT TO DO: 1. Live a consistently healthy lifestyle. 2. Don't smoke. 3. Incorporate fruits and veggies into your diet. 4. Maintain a normal weight and exercise.

7

An electrophysiology study detects blockages in the heart.

Electrophysiology investigates the electrical system of the heart. If the mechanical function — **how the heart beats** — is in question, the procedure will detect whether the heart is beating too fast or too slow. Electrical cables, inserted through the groin and attached to the heart are used to measure activity. If the heart is beating too slow, a pacemaker may be implanted. If beating too fast, an ablation procedure to correct the abnormality may be performed.

WHAT TO DO: See your physician if you have recurrent, unexplained fainting spells, dizziness, light-headedness or shortness of breath.



Written by Marie Wolf. SOURCES: 1. Dr. Christopher La Mendola, Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center 2. heart.org 3. niddk.nih.gov (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases) 4. hopkinsmedicine.org 5. goredforwomen.org 6. MayoClinic.org 7. Dr. Armen Ovsepian, Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center