

# THE TRUSTEE

May 2018

BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUR HEART

**C**ardiovascular disease ranks first in cause of death in the world with more than 17.3 million

deaths annually, according to any article in HealthWay, by Lisa Douglas. The United States accounts for 800,000 of those deaths. Many believe that as long as they don't smoke, eat a good diet, and exercise regularly, the risks are diminished. True, but the risks are not eliminated and you may have some bad habits that you overlook, secure in your beliefs that you're doing well. As with all things, there is always room to improve.

**SLEEP:** Studies show those who sleep less than 6 hours a night are prone to artery calcification and had a 79% increase in coronary heart disease than those who got 8+ hours. Adequate rest also allows for lowering of blood pressure. There are 18 million Americans who have sleep apnea where the disorder causes a stop/start in breathing and affects the quality of sleep, including an increase in blood pressure.

**LAUGHING:** Stress causes adrenal fatigue which harms the arteries and releases hormones like adrenalin and cortisol. They narrow arteries and increase heart rate and blood pressure.

**FLOSSING:** Good dental care is important. The calcium plaque buildup on teeth and the bacteria in it produces inflammation throughout the arterial system which promotes atherosclerosis and blood clotting. It's believed the bacteria may enter the bloodstream and attach to fatty deposits in heart vessels and cause blood clots.

**AIR POLLUTION:** Extended exposure to polluted air produces thicker carotid arteries.

**STRETCHING:** People who perform badly in the sit-and-reach stretch test usually have a higher systolic blood pressure. The increased flexibility of the spine correlates to flexibility of the arterial system and moderates blood pressure.

**SWEATING:** Ingestion of heavy metals like mercury and lead can increase blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Many times consumption is unknown, as with eating fish, drinking wine from lead crystal, or drinking water that travels through lead pipes. Do some cardio or take a steam to sweat it out.

**ALCOHOL:** Excess consumption of alcohol is associated with high blood pressure, high blood fats, and heart failure, but a little red wine, 1-2/day, can be beneficial.

**SUGARS:** Those big soda displays at the end of super market aisles are tempting, but studies show that drinking two or more diet sodas a day results in a 23% higher risk of heart failure than drinking the same amount of coffee, tea, fruit juice, or water.

**SITTING:** In heart health, it's the statistical equivalent of smoking. One hour of sitting negatively affects fat and sugar levels and results in a 14% increase in coronary artery calcification.

**FRUITS/VEGGIES:** A plant based diet, where there are 5 or more servings/day, reduces the risk of heart disease by 20%. Plants contain fiber, water, vitamins, minerals, and anti-oxidants. Doctors recommend 50% of a meal be plant based.

**PROCESSED FOODS:** Bacon, hot dogs, pepperoni, sausage, and most of the deli case not only have a direct relationship with colorectal cancer, but are associated with a spike in heart attacks.

**SALT:** No more than 3800mgs./day is recommended and most of it is already in the food. 1 in 3 Americans has high blood pressure and excess sodium is the culprit.

**OVERWEIGHT:** 2/3 of Americans are overweight or obese. 80 million are carrying too much bulk. Enough said!

Life style and genetics contribute to heart disease and it's important to have regular medical checkups. The sooner you have a blueprint of your physical makeup, the sooner you can make lifestyle changes, the better you'll feel, and the healthier your heart. Create a dated chart and keep track of the key risk factors involving your heart; blood pressure, vitamin D, cholesterol levels, heart rate, blood glucose, and weight.

Join a gym! In pharmacies, use the free blood pressure machine. At home, have a bathroom scale and consider purchasing a blood pressure machine if you have blood pressure issues. And, read the label and limit those foods high in trans fats, high fructose corn syrup, and sodium.

**OPEN ENROLLMENT:** NYSUT Conf. Center, Wednesday, June 6, 3-5pm

**IN MEMORIAM:** Marjorie Combs | Katherine Brinnier