

Heart Disease

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Heart disease is by far the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. To emphasize this point — it is also the leading cause of death for women and not breast cancer. Heart Disease accounts for almost 30% of all deaths in the US. This includes a variety of diseases, such as hypertension (high blood pressure), coronary heart disease, heart attacks and strokes, high cholesterol, angina and atherosclerosis. It is important to realize that while many of the pharmaceuticals that persons take for these conditions do stabilize the condition, that person still has heart disease and needs to be active and take preventative action in heart health.

If you or your loved one is on beta blockers for hypertension, a diuretic for fluid control, and a statin for their cholesterol, you are under what I would call symptomatic or palliative treatment. This means that you are on a treatment that concentrates on reducing the severity of disease symptoms, rather than striving to halt, delay, or reverse progression of the disease itself or provide a cure.

If the medications were a cure then you or your parent would not need to stay on them. That being said, medications do offer real help for patients to control, things like cholesterol and blood pressure, and they do reduce your risk factors while on them, but again we need to look at what is happening in their lives and lifestyle to understand how this came about. How did you and your body create the conditions for hypertension? How is your diet? Do you eat processed foods? Do you eat fast foods? Do you include vegetables or fruits with your meals? How stressed are you? What is your family history of heart disease? Do you exercise? Are you hydrated?

Here is some dietary and nutritional advice to promote heart health in your life, as well as your parents' and loved ones' lives:

- Take a good quality fish oil that has been shown in studies to decrease hypertension. The fish oil has a multi-factorial effect on the arteries. It slows the inflammation down, specifically C-reactive Protein (CRP), which is a predictor of heart attacks. It lowers the circulating Triglycerides in your blood, which will decrease the damage done by the LDL "bad cholesterol" as it tries to harden into plaque and narrow your arteries, which increases your risk for a stroke or heart attack. The fish oils also keep your cholesterol production in check, by increasing HDL the "good cholesterol." This carries away the cholesterol that would like to create inflammation in your arteries.
- A supplement called CoQ 10 has also been shown to decrease blood pressure in amounts of 100 mg daily. CoQ 10 is a unique enzyme; it actively increases the mitochondria (fuel cells) in most organs and especially in your heart muscles to create a positive contraction. Those that take the class of statin drugs or natural red yeast rice, will deplete their body's own CoQ 10 production – thus making it even more difficult for your heart to compensate its lack of production.
- So what about red wine and the Mediterranean Diet? There are many reports on the benefits of red wine (in moderation of course) and the constituent resveritrol, which is a nutrient in the skin of red grapes. There have been studies showing a decrease in the pro-inflammatory marker NF-kappaB and the ability to dilate arteries.
- The Mediterranean Diet, a diet rich in vegetables, legumes, fruits and olive oil, results in lower risk of death from heart disease. Good for you. Good for your loved ones.