

CORONARY HEART DISEASE IN YOUNG - AN EPIDEMIC IN THE OFFING

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Coronary heart disease amongst the Indians is rampant and the most disturbing feature of this is the premature age of onset. Indians have four fold higher prevalence and risk of death due to a heart attack compared with other population groups all over the world. The rate of progression of disease and deposition of cholesterol in the blood vessels of body is much more rapid among the Indians as compared to the western world. The western world over the last two decades has been able to slow this pattern of disease in their population groups but this is not the case in the developing world, especially in India.

In a research study of 116 patients having bypass surgery in the age group of less than 40 years, it was found that the first presentation of blocked arteries was with a heart attack in 44.8% of patients. They had no previous history of chest pain or any other symptom suggestive of any heart problem. Doctors say that there are no warning signs and unless one makes an effort to look for signs of impending doom, by seeking precautionary routine health checks, one may present first time with a heart attack with all its attendant risks in the form of permanent damage to the heart and death in 10-20% of patients. In further **detailed analysis** of the same subset of patients in the above study, it was found that 55% patients were smokers, 31% had high blood pressure, 29% were over weight and 25% had diabetes. Majority of these patients (61%) had blockages in all the three arteries of heart and incidence of multiple and diffuse blockages was virtually twice that of patients more than 50 years of age.

It is therefore imperative that precautions should be taken to avoid this catastrophic and devastating disease. These precautions should start right from birth and not later on in life only. In studies carried out in infants, it was found that fat deposition in the arteries of the heart could be demonstrated in children less than 1 year old. Therefore right

habits should be inculcated right from childhood. Besides one should lay stress on life style modification and effective stress control management. One should avoid eating fatty and fried foods and should include plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables in the diet. Trans fatty acids (bad fat in blood), formed by repeated heating of oil, cause blockages of the arteries of the heart and therefore the housewives should make it a point not to reheat or reuse oils while cooking food. One should also exercise regularly, preferably 20-30 minutes every day or at least 3 days in a week, to derive benefits for the heart. One should avoid not only smoking but also not being in company of other people who smoke (passive smoking). Also one should undergo regular health checks beyond the age of 35 years and it is recommended that one should have health checks once in 5 years beyond the age of 35, once in two years beyond the age of 45, once in a year beyond the age of 60. Also young Indians are more prone to diabetes and obesity, specially of the belly region (Pot belly) and these risks need to be countered by adopting healthy life style practices.

WHAT CAN ONE DO ?

- Diet
 - Cut down on heavy fried food
 - No frying; baking/grilling is fine
 - Plenty of fresh fruit & vegetables
 - Restrict salt intake
 - Cut down on in between meals snacks
- Exercise
 - 20 minutes brisk walk every day
- Control weight
- No smoking - Beware of Passive Smoking
- Relieve Stress
 - Yoga/meditation
 - Pursue hobbies
- Regular Executive Health Check
- Control Blood Pressure, Blood Sugar & Cholesterol levels, if elevated

EXECUTIVE HEALTH CHECK

"A Stitch in Time Saves Nine"

For every one

- More than 35 years - Once in 5 years
- More than 45 years - Once in 2 years
 - More than 60 years - Once in a year