



**HEALTHY LIFESTYLES
FOR
HEALTHY AGING**

MAR | 2008 | ISSUE 4

Heart Disease Back On The Rise

Two decades of Mayo Clinic analysis show an upswing in coronary disease. In fact, a recent study found clogged arteries in young adults, age 16 on up—suggesting younger generations are headed for increased heart disease risk. The latest findings mark the first shift since the mid-1960s, when the decline in heart disease began.

In the study, researchers from the Mayo Clinic and University of British Columbia reviewed Olmsted County (Minnesota) death certificate data from 1981 to 2004. The county has been “a reliable snapshot of national disease trends” and longtime “focus of detailed medical record reporting by Mayo Clinic and the Rochester Epidemiology Project” per a February 11, 2008 article at the www.mayoclinic.com.

From the pathology reports of 515 people, ages 16-64, researchers found 82% (425 persons) had “a degree of coronary artery atherosclerosis assessed at autopsy. The article states that 83% of that group had signs of coronary artery disease (CAD) and around 8% had a high level of the disease. Their 23-year analysis demonstrated three categories of decline: high level, any level and average degree of CAD. Yet, the degree of these declines stopped after 1995 and “may have actually headed upward—after the year 2000.”

There is a corresponding rise in obesity and diabetes rates during this same time frame; however, further research of this same group will determine if there is a link between these latest findings and the obesity/diabetes rise.

In a February 11 Reuters article on topic, University of Illinois’ S. Jay Olshansky, author of an editorial on the research appearing in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, said the introduction of computers and a more sedentary lifestyle, the growth of fast-food chains and larger portion sizes, reduced physical education in schools and increased consumption of high-fructose corn syrup led to the obesity explosion.

More facts. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that “in 2003, just over a million American men died”—approximately 80% died of heart disease or one of the nine other leading causes of death among American men (cancer, unintentional injuries, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease/COPD, diabetes, influenza and pneumonia, suicide, kidney disease, Alzheimer’s disease).

Per the American Heart Association, “over 410,000 men died of cardiovascular disease” in 2004 and “about one-fourth of all heart disease-related deaths occur in men, 35-65.” Men typically develop the disease 10-15 years earlier than women—consequently dying in their prime.

Surprisingly, heart patients rarely change their diet. A February 11 Reuters article reports disconcerting findings. Dr. Yunsheng Ma, University of Massachusetts Medical School, conducted a follow-up study of 555 heart disease patients for a year. He and his colleagues discovered that few met “recommendations for fruit, vegetable and fiber intake and were eating a ‘disturbing’ amount of trans fat.”

According to the article, researchers used the Alternate Healthy Eating Index (AHEI), a measurement of heart-healthy eating, including “fruit and vegetable consumption, amount of trans fat consumed, and ratio of white-to-red meat eaten.”

- The average score was 30.8—out of 80
- Only 12.4% at five or more vegetable servings daily
- Only 7.8% at four or more servings of fruit daily
- Less than 8% met cereal fiber recommendations
- Only 50% exercised for at least 20 minutes at least once in the past 3 months

One of the problems is only 20% had cardiac rehabilitation following an event; those that did, their programs typically focused on exercise, not nutrition.

Reducing your risks. Regardless of your age, start making healthier lifestyle changes now. Here is the Mayo Clinic's list of preventive steps you can take:

- Stop smoking or using tobacco products
- Eat a varied diet rich in fruits and vegetables
- Avoid high-fat foods
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Exercise at least 30 minutes most days of the week
- Have your cholesterol tested
- Diabetics should keep blood sugar under control
- Get regular blood pressure checks
- Take a daily dose of aspirin, if your doctor okays it



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