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## **Nurture Your Cardiovascular Health**

The cardiovascular system consists of the heart and blood vessels and is responsible for carrying nutrients and oxygen to the tissues and removing carbon dioxide and other waste from them. Diseases affecting the cardiovascular system include arteriosclerosis, coronary artery disease, heart valve disease, arrhythmia, heart failure, hypertension, orthostatic hypotension, shock, endocarditis, diseases of the aorta and its branches, disorders of the peripheral vascular system, and congenital heart disease. February is the American Heart Association's Heart Health Awareness Month, emphasizing the importance of cardiovascular health and the dangers of cardiovascular disease.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading health threat with heart disease and stroke topping the list of the first and second leading causes of death worldwide. One out of every two men and one out of every three women will develop heart disease sometime in their life. Despite dramatic medical advances over the past fifty years, heart disease remains a leading cause of death globally and the number one cause of death in the United States. Cardiovascular disease is not just a man's disease, in women, the condition is responsible for about 29% of deaths, reports the CDC. Although more men die of heart disease than women, females tend to be under diagnosed, often to the point that it's too late to help them once the condition is discovered.

By integrating acupuncture and Oriental medicine into your heart healthy lifestyle, you can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease by as much as 80%. Steps to prevention include managing high blood pressure and cholesterol, quitting smoking, eating healthy, maintaining a healthy weight, physical activity, reducing stress and improved sleep - all of which can be helped with acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

### **5 Steps to a Healthy Heart with Acupuncture**

#### **1. Manage High Blood Pressure**

High blood pressure makes the heart work harder, increasing its oxygen demands and contributing to angina. This excessive pressure can lead to an enlarged heart (cardiomegaly), as well as damage to blood vessels in the kidneys and brain. It increases the risk of heart attacks, stroke and kidney disease.

Acupuncture has been found to be particularly helpful in lowering blood pressure. By applying acupuncture needles at specific sites along the wrist, inside the forearm or in the leg, researchers at the Susan Samueli Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of California, Irvine, were able to stimulate the release of opioids, which decreases the heart's activity and thus its need for oxygen. This, in turn, lowers blood pressure.

#### **2. Quit Smoking**

Most people associate cigarette smoking with breathing problems and lung cancer. But did you know that smoking is also a major cause of coronary artery disease? In fact, about 20% of all deaths from heart disease are directly related to cigarette smoking.

Acupuncture has shown to be an effective treatment for smoking. Acupuncture treatments for smoking cessation focus on jitters, cravings, irritability, and restlessness - symptoms that people commonly complain about when they quit. It also aids in relaxation and detoxification.

### **3. Maintain a Healthy Weight**

Obesity is associated with diabetes, high blood pressure and coronary artery disease, all of which increase the risk of developing heart disease, but studies have shown that excess body weight itself (and not just the associated medical conditions) can also lead to heart failure. Even if you are entirely healthy otherwise, being overweight still places you at a greater risk of developing heart failure.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine are an excellent adjunctive tool when it comes to losing weight. They can help to energize the body, maximize the absorption of nutrients, regulate elimination, control overeating, suppress the appetite, and reduce anxiety.

### **4. Reduce Stress**

Stress is a normal part of life, but if left unmanaged, stress can lead to emotional, psychological, and even physical problems, including heart disease, high blood pressure, chest pains, or irregular heart beats. Medical researchers aren't exactly sure how stress increases the risk of heart disease. Stress itself might be a risk factor, or it could be that high levels of stress make other risk factors worse. For example, if you are under stress, your blood pressure goes up, you may overeat, you may exercise less, and you may be more likely to smoke.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the substantial benefits of acupuncture in the treatment of stress, anxiety and mental health. In addition to acupuncture, Oriental medicine offers a whole gamut of tools and techniques that can be integrated into your life to keep stress in check. These tools include Tui Na, Qi Gong exercises, herbal medicine, dietary therapy, meditations and acupressure that you can administer at home.

### **5. Improve Sleep**

Poor sleep has been linked with high blood pressure, atherosclerosis, heart failure, heart attacks, stroke, diabetes, and obesity. Researchers have shown that getting at least eight hours of sleep is needed for good heart health and getting less than eight hours of sleep can put you at a greater risk for developing heart disease.

Acupuncture has shown great success treating a wide array of sleep problems without any of the side effects of prescription or over-the-counter sleep aids. The acupuncture treatments for problems sleeping focus on the root disharmony within the body that is causing the insomnia. Therefore, those who use acupuncture for insomnia achieve not only better sleep, but also an overall improvement of physical and mental health.

**Come in for a consultation during Heart Health Awareness Month to see how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can assist you with your heart health and help you to live a long, healthy life!**

## **Acupuncture for Cholesterol Management**

It's important to have your blood cholesterol levels checked since you can have high cholesterol and not realize it. Most of the 65 million Americans with high cholesterol have no symptoms. All adults age 20 and older should have their cholesterol levels checked at least once every five years. If you have elevated cholesterol, you'll need to have it tested more often.

Research has clearly shown that lowering cholesterol can reduce the risk of developing heart disease. Whether you have heart disease already or want to prevent it, you can reduce your risk for having a heart attack by lowering your cholesterol level.

According to the American Heart Association, exercise and a healthy balanced diet low in cholesterol and saturated fats is important to lowering risk and improving your cardiovascular health. Speak to your health care providers to make sure your cholesterol is being monitored and find out how acupuncture and Oriental

medicine can help you stay healthy.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be used to treat many of the health conditions known to drastically increase the risk of heart disease and high cholesterol including smoking, high blood pressure, excess weight, and diabetes.

Excess weight tends to increase your low density lipoprotein (LDL) levels, raise triglycerides, a fatty substance in the blood and in food, and lowers your high density lipoprotein (HDL) levels. Regular physical activity can help you lose weight and raise HDL, lower triglycerides, and lower LDL.

**Call today to see how Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you with your cholesterol management goals!**

## Heart Healthy Foods

Having a healthy diet is one of the best ways to support your cardiovascular health and prevent heart disease.

Here are some suggested foods which will support your heart healthy lifestyle:

### Cruciferous Vegetables

Cruciferous vegetables such as kale, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, radish, turnips, and cabbages are a gold mine of antioxidants and other heart-saving phytochemicals. Make sure that cruciferous vegetables are part of your heart healthy diet every day.

### Fish

Fatty fish such as salmon and anchovies are loaded with the omega-3 fatty acids that will help your heart maintain a steady rhythm. Having a serving of fish a week could reduce your risk of death from a heart attack by 52%.

### Flaxseed

Flaxseed is one of the most potent sources of heart health-promoting omega-3 fats. Studies indicate that adding flaxseed to your diet can reduce the development of heart disease by 46% while helping keep red blood cells from clumping together and forming clots that can block arteries. Sprinkle 2 Tbsp of flax-seed a day on your cereal or salad.

### Fruit

Oranges contain folic acid that helps lower levels of homocysteine, a heart attack risk factor.

Grapes are loaded with flavonoids and resveratrol, both potent antioxidants that may discourage red blood cells from clumping together and forming an artery-blocking clot.

Pomegranates are chock-full of potassium and polyphenols, which promote heart health and have been shown to help lower cholesterol. The latest studies are showing that the juice limits the genetic tendency toward hardening of the arteries.

### Garlic

Just one clove a day, or 300 mg three times daily, reduces the risk of heart attack at least three ways: It discourages red blood cells from sticking together and blocking your arteries, it reduces arterial damage, and it discourages cholesterol from lining the arteries and making them so narrow that blockages are likely.

### Green Tea

Green tea contains several powerful antioxidants that reduce bad cholesterol and boost good cholesterol, improving an individual's overall cholesterol profile. Drinking green tea also seems to enhance cardiovascular health by improving the consistency of platelets in the blood and may even lower blood pressure.

### Nuts

Studies have found that those who eat more than 5 oz of nuts a week are one-third less likely to have either heart disease or a heart attack. Just don't overdo it as nuts can pile on the pounds.

### Red Wine

Scientific studies overwhelmingly show that a daily glass of wine can reduce your risk of a heart attack. Both plant compounds called saponins and antioxidants in the "fruit of the vine" work to protect arteries. Researchers have found that red is much more effective than white for improving heart health.