

Horrifying Signs That You're Going to Die From Heart Disease

You've probably heard that heart disease is the No. 1 killer of both men and women in the U.S. That's most likely because so many of our common habits are not very heart-healthy. In fact, heart disease accounts for 40% of all U.S. deaths, more than all

forms of cancer combined. "Heart disease" is actually an umbrella term that includes conditions like heart attack, cardiac arrest, congestive heart failure, and the most common form, coronary artery disease. And unfortunately, many of the signs

that you're destined for heart disease aren't what you might think. If you have several of the following symptoms, your health issues could very well be in your heart **(men aren't likely to experience No. 7).**

1. Frequent nausea and indigestion

Nausea and indigestion can be caused by a lot of things, many of them harmless. But if you haven't eaten anything unsettling, you're not sick, and you have other symptoms of heart problems, see a doctor. Nausea and indigestion without a reasonable explanation can be a sign of a heart attack, and women are more likely than men to experience them.

2. Jaw pain and toothaches
Some cardiologists claim they can tell a lot about a person's overall health by how healthy their mouth is. So it makes sense that unexplained pain in the jaw and teeth, which is often accompanied by a headache, is a sign of a heart attack. This isn't often considered a symptom of heart disease, so be especially diligent and proactive if you have unexplained jaw or tooth pain.

3. Snoring
How loud is your breathing when you're sleeping? While it's normal to snore a little, loud snoring that resembles gasping or choking sounds can be a sign of sleep apnea, according to WebMD. This is when you stop breathing for brief moments, which puts extra strain on your heart.

4. Neck circumference

It probably seems like a bit of a stretch that neck size is tied to heart health. But it's true: A recent study from Brazil showed that people with large necks, especially men, may be at higher risk for heart disease. According to study author Cristina Baena, Ph.D., fat deposits around your neck can produce inflammatory substances that lead to plaque buildup in the carotid arteries in your neck, which hampers your heart health.

5. Sweating
Sweating is a natural and healthy reaction to physical activity or hot weather. But if you're sweating on a 50-degree day while you're sedentary and you also have discomfort in your chest, it could mean the onset of a heart attack.

6. Sexual dysfunction
If you're having trouble performing in the bedroom, heart disease is probably the last thing on your mind. But when the blood vessels aren't working well, sexual problems can easily occur. Even if you aren't experiencing other symptoms of heart disease, it's best to see a doctor and rule it out.

7. Marital stress
Stress in a marriage is terrible for the heart, especially if you're a woman. Frequent arguments in

your relationship increase the risks of an actual broken heart. Differences in the way the sexes handle stress, as well as hormones, can explain why men aren't as likely to experience this.

8. Swollen body parts
Swollen body parts could indicate serious health problems. If you have swollen legs, feet, and ankles, it could be a sign your heart doesn't pump blood as effectively as it should, according to WebMD. The body parts get swollen due to blood backing up in the veins. WebMD also notes, "Heart failure can also make it harder for the kidneys to remove extra water and sodium from the body, which can lead to bloating."

9. An ounce of prevention
Of course, the best way to avoid problems with heart disease is to do your best to keep your heart healthy. While some heart troubles are genetic, there are plenty of lifestyle changes you can make to stay out of the ER. Exercising, quitting smoking, and eating nutritious foods are great ways to keep your ticker ticking for many years to come. There are also some surprisingly effective things you can do, like getting plenty of rest and getting a dog.

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Vitamin D Supplements: How to Tell If You Need Them This Winter

Walk through the vitamin aisle of any drug store and you'll likely see a pretty hefty stock of vitamin D supplements. There's a good reason for this: According to an article published in the Journal of Pharmacology & Pharmacotherapeutics, almost 50 percent of the population worldwide is deficient in vitamin D — which is cause for concern, given that vitamin D is a key factor in bone health. "Vitamin D is essential because it helps the absorption of calcium in our bodies," nutritionist Keri Gans tells Allure. And, as the Cleveland Clinic reports, vitamin D also serves to block the release of a hormone that can lead to brittle bones. In other words, vitamin D is important, and many people aren't getting enough. To find out if you might be one of them, read on for what you need to know about vitamin D deficiency and to see if taking a supple-

ment could boost your health. **Who might benefit from taking vitamin D?** "Postmenopausal women, women on long-term steroids, [and] expectant or breastfeeding moms have...increased needs in calcium intake for keeping their bones strong," Gans says. "Also, in regards to prenatal health, it is important for the development of healthy bones in the fetus." A deficiency is also more common in people with dark skin than light, because the increased amounts of melanin serve as a natural barrier to the UV rays. Similarly, people who regularly wear sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher may have reduced vitamin D levels. (This doesn't mean you get to skip daily sunscreen application — getting sufficient vitamin D shouldn't mean putting yourself at risk for skin damage.) Weight and diet play a role here, too.

People who are obese may also benefit from supplementing their diets with vitamin D to achieve optimal levels, and people with vegan diets may need to do the same: "A person who follows a strict vegan diet might be at a slightly higher risk, since they may not consume as many calcium-rich foods," Gans says.

Is taking vitamin D more important in the winter? It can be, Gans says. The most commonly known cause of vitamin D deficiency is lack of exposure sunlight. According to Mayo Clinic, few foods contain the vitamin. (According to the National Institutes of Health, the best food sources of vitamin D are fatty fish like salmon, tuna, and mackerel.)

This means that for most people, the big fireball in the sky is a critical source of the stuff. Unsurprisingly, vitamin D levels can take a dive during the winter, when sunlight is oh-so-scarce. "For some people, they get their daily vitamin D from sunlight," Gans says. "And depending on where they live, the position of the sun in the winter doesn't yield strong enough ultraviolet B rays to penetrate the atmosphere."

What benefits could taking vitamin D have beyond bone health? Your bones might not be the only part of your body benefiting from increased levels. There is some evidence that suggests a connection between vitamin D levels and mood, as well as some research that points to an association between vitamin D deficiency and depressive symptoms.

Though the current research on the topic is limited and inconclusive and vitamin D supplements certainly aren't guaranteed to boost your mood, they don't come with many risks — as long as you stick with the recommended dosage, which is measured in international units (IU) and is indicated right on the front of supplement bottles.

So how much vitamin D should I consider taking? "There is potentially no harm in taking the recommended dosage of 600 IU daily," Gans says, citing the Institute of Medicine's recommendation for healthy individuals. "But to really benefit from the supplement, it would warrant being tested to find out if a deficiency is present." If you want to check your vitamin D levels, make an appointment with your doctor, who can order a blood test to determine where you stand. If you are deficient, Gans says, your doctor may recommend a supplement with a higher dosage.

Just be sure not to take more than 10,000 IU per day. "Since vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin, too high a dosage can result in harmful side effects such as fatigue, loss of appetite, dehydration, vomiting, confusion, and high blood pressure," Gans warns. Again, as with any supplement, if you're unsure about exactly how much you should be taking, it's never a bad idea to check with your doctor. It's probably also not a bad idea to book a vacation to a sunnier climate.

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