

Laughter May Be Best Medicine for Heart Disease

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NEW ORLEANS - Laughter may indeed be the best medicine, researchers said on Wednesday as they released a study showing that people who report that they laugh more are less likely to have heart disease.

"The old axiom that laughter is the best medicine appears to hold true when it comes to protecting your heart," Dr. Michael Miller, director of the center for preventive cardiology at the University of Maryland in Baltimore, told a news conference.

"This is the first study to demonstrate a link between laughter and heart disease."

Miller and colleagues told a meeting of the American Heart Association that they believe laughter may release chemicals that relax the blood vessels.

"It's not just going 'ha, ha, ha'," Miller said. "It's having a good, hearty laugh."

For their study they interviewed 150 patients who had either suffered heart attacks in the past or had undergone procedures such as angioplasty to clear out clogged arteries.

They compared their responses to those of 150 people the same age who did not have heart disease.

The questions came off standard tests used to measure humor in day-to-day situations, such as getting to a party to find someone else wearing the same outfit.

"If you were woken up in the middle of the night by a good friend who had

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