

Heart and Gut Health Digest

ISSUE #3

NOV 2024

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the third edition of the Heart and Gut Health Digest! Your continued support and engagement inspire us to bring you the latest insights and practical tips for better heart and gut health. We're grateful to have you on this journey toward improved well-being.

As we look ahead, we're excited to share a big announcement: **HG Cardiowise**, our upcoming YouTube channel, will launch early next year! Through this platform, we aim to educate and empower you with credible, easy-to-understand information about heart health, prevention, and management of diseases. Stay tuned for updates—we can't wait to take this next step with you.

Thank you for being a part of our growing community. Your feedback and enthusiasm are invaluable to us, so keep sharing your thoughts!

Here's to a healthier, happier you.

With warm wishes and gratitude,

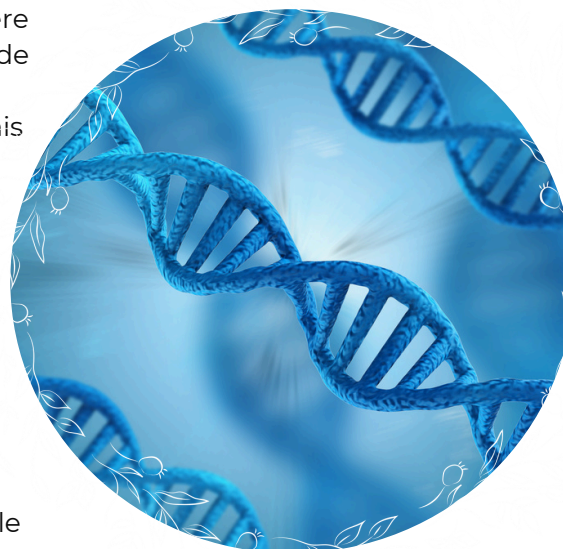
Dr Aneya Avenkar & Dr Manata Avenkar

The role of genetics in heart disease: Is it all in your DNA?

Heart disease is often thought of as a lifestyle-driven illness, but genetics play a substantial role too. The latest research shows that family history can increase heart disease risk by 40–60%. For Indian populations, where heart disease strikes a decade earlier than in Western countries, understanding this genetic predisposition becomes critical.

In India, heart disease remains the leading cause of death, with coronary artery disease (CAD) on the rise among young adults. Multiple studies have indicated that South Asians carry a unique genetic profile that predisposes them to heart

conditions. Understanding how genetics and lifestyle interact may help with prevention and early intervention for those most at risk.



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HG Superspeciality Clinic

S2-21, Shoppe Dosti Imperia,
Opp R Mall, Manpada, GB Rd,
Thane (W) 400607
Phone: 9653404007

022-40101327

www.hgsuperspecialityclinic.com

How Do Genes Influence Heart Disease?

Genetics in heart disease primarily influence risk factors such as:

- 1. **High Cholesterol (Familial Hypercholesterolemia):** Mutations in genes like LDLR, APOB, or PCSK9 can cause familial hypercholesterolemia (FH), leading to persistently high LDL cholesterol levels. If untreated, FH can result in early heart attacks.
- 2. **Structural Heart Diseases:** Conditions like hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), caused by mutations in genes such as MYH7 or TNNT2, lead to thickened heart muscles and increase the risk of arrhythmias or sudden cardiac death.
- 3. **Hypertension and Diabetes:** Variants in genes like ACE predispose individuals to high blood pressure, while Indians' genetic tendency toward insulin resistance heightens the risk of diabetes—a significant driver of coronary artery disease.
- 4. **Clotting Disorders:** Mutations like Factor V Leiden increase the likelihood of abnormal blood clotting, which can lead to stroke or heart attack.

Family History and Heart Disease: A Key Predictor

Genetics alone does not determine heart disease, but having a first-degree relative (parent, sibling) with heart disease nearly doubles one's risk. For Indians, where family ties are strong and multigenerational lifestyles are common, tracking family history is invaluable and can help doctors determine your own risk and take preventive actions early on.

What is relevant family history?

- **First-degree relatives:** Parents, siblings, and children. A history of heart disease in any of these increases your own risk significantly.
- **Second-degree relatives:** Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and half-siblings. While the impact on risk is smaller, it's still important, especially if multiple relatives have heart disease.
- If a parent had a heart attack **before age 55 (for men) or 65 (for women)**, your risk is significantly elevated.
- A **family history of HCM or other structural abnormalities** warrants screening for all close relatives.

Genetic Testing for Heart Disease: What You Need to Know

Genetic testing is gaining traction as a tool to predict and manage heart disease risk. However, in India, cost is a significant factor, and it's crucial to focus on tests with clear, actionable value.

1. Lipid Panel and Familial Hypercholesterolemia

Testing: Genes tested are LDLR, APOB, PCSK9 in individuals with genetic high cholesterol allows for aggressive cholesterol management with statins, diet, and lifestyle changes, reducing the risk of heart attacks by 50% or more

2. Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM) Panel

Genes tested are MYH7, TNNT2, TNNI3, and others. Helps identify at-risk family members who may require regular echocardiograms and lifestyle modifications. In some cases, prophylactic interventions, such as implantable defibrillators, may be considered.

Beyond DNA: The Role of Epigenetics

Epigenetics—gene expression changes influenced by the environment—also impacts heart health. External factors like diet, stress, smoking, and even high pollution levels can trigger gene expression changes that increase heart disease risk. For example, air pollution exposure can turn on genes related to inflammation, further stressing cardiovascular health. This means that even if you have a genetic predisposition, lifestyle choices can either mitigate or amplify this risk.

Can We Beat Genetics?

While genetic predispositions can't be changed, understanding your risk empowers you to manage it effectively. If you have a family history of CAD or structural heart diseases like HCM, you can still reduce your likelihood of developing symptoms by adopting a heart-healthy lifestyle.

Takeaway: Genetics is a Guide, Not a Fate

Genetics is a significant factor in heart disease but doesn't determine your future alone. By understanding your family history, pursuing preventive screenings, and living a heart-healthy lifestyle, you can lessen your risk.

Actionable Steps for Those with a Genetic Predisposition:

- Routine Screening:** High-risk individuals should monitor blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose more regularly than the general population.
- Genetic Counseling:** A genetic counselor can interpret test results and suggest actions
- Early Medical Intervention:** For certain genetic risks, doctors may prescribe statins, ACE inhibitors, or beta-blockers earlier than they would for lower-risk patients.
- Lifestyle:** A balanced diet, regular exercise, avoiding smoking, and stress management are foundational, regardless of genetic risk.

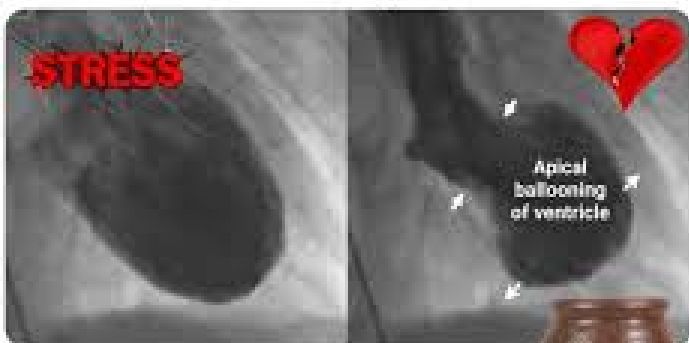
Broken Heart Syndrome: When Emotions Take a Toll on the Heart

While the human heart has long been a symbol of emotion. Joy, sorrow, love, and grief—our most profound feelings are often described as coming "from the heart." But what happens when emotions, particularly sudden and intense ones, affect the heart in a very real way?

Broken Heart Syndrome is a fascinating yet serious condition that proves the deep connection between our emotions and physical health. Often triggered by overwhelming stress, this syndrome can mimic a heart attack but is typically temporary and reversible with proper care.

Understanding Broken Heart Syndrome

Known medically as Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy, Broken Heart Syndrome is a temporary weakening of the heart muscle. The condition gets its name from the Japanese word takotsubo, which refers to a pot used to catch octopuses. The heart of someone with this syndrome takes on a similar balloon-like shape.



Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy (Broken Heart Syndrome)



Unlike a heart attack, which is caused by blocked arteries, Broken Heart Syndrome is triggered by a surge of stress hormones, such as adrenaline. This hormonal flood can stun the heart, impairing its ability to pump blood effectively.

A Real-Life Example: The Weight of Sudden Stress

Let's take the story of Sunita, a 56-year-old homemaker from Mumbai. One evening, Sunita received a distressing phone call informing her that her younger brother had been in a car accident. Although the injuries were not life-threatening, the news was enough to overwhelm her.

Moments later, Sunita felt a sharp pain in her chest and struggled to catch her breath. Her family rushed her to the hospital, fearing she was having a heart attack. However, tests revealed no blockages in her arteries. Instead, she was diagnosed with Broken Heart Syndrome, where the stress of the situation caused her heart to temporarily weaken. Thankfully, with medications and supportive care, Sunita's heart recovered fully within a few weeks.

Who Is at Risk?

While anyone can experience Broken Heart Syndrome, certain groups are more vulnerable:

1. Middle-aged or older women: Nearly 90% of cases occur in women, especially after menopause.
2. Emotionally or physically stressed individuals: Common triggers include:
 - Loss of a loved one or a major life stressor like financial trouble.
 - Intense arguments or conflicts.
 - Physical stressors like surgery, accidents, or illness.
3. People with no prior heart disease: Unlike heart attacks, this condition often strikes individuals without significant cardiac history.

What Symptoms should I watch for

Broken Heart Syndrome can mimic a heart attack, making prompt medical evaluation essential. Common symptoms include:

- **Severe chest pain:** Sudden and intense, often mistaken for angina.
- **Shortness of breath:** Difficulty breathing, even at rest.
- **Palpitations:** A racing or irregular heartbeat.
- **Fatigue or dizziness:** Feeling weak or faint.

These symptoms often appear within minutes to hours of an emotional or physical trigger.



The Science Behind Broken Heart Syndrome

What exactly happens during this condition? A sudden surge of stress hormones like adrenaline affects the heart in several ways:

- **Constricted blood vessels:** Hormones narrow the coronary arteries, temporarily reducing blood flow.
- **Stunned heart muscle:** The heart's left ventricle weakens and expands, impairing its ability to pump efficiently.

Interestingly, this is a temporary condition, and most patients recover completely within a few weeks.

Diagnosis: How Doctors Differentiate It from a Heart Attack

Since the symptoms closely resemble a heart attack, doctors use multiple tests to confirm the diagnosis:

1. **Electrocardiogram (ECG):** May show abnormalities similar to a heart attack.
2. **Blood Tests:** Elevated cardiac enzymes, but not as high as in a heart attack.
3. **Echocardiogram:** Shows the heart's balloon-like shape.
4. **Coronary Angiography:** Reveals no blockages, ruling out a heart attack.



Complications: Is It Dangerous?

While most people recover fully, Broken Heart Syndrome is not without risks. Rare complications include:

- **Heart failure:** The heart struggles to pump blood effectively.
- **Arrhythmias:** Irregular heartbeats, which may require treatment.
- **Shock:** A life-threatening drop in blood pressure.

In very rare cases, the condition can be fatal if not managed promptly.

Treatment and Recovery

The good news is that Broken Heart Syndrome is usually reversible. Treatment focuses on relieving symptoms and supporting heart function:

1. Medications:

- Beta-blockers to control stress hormones.
- ACE inhibitors to help the heart recover.
- Diuretics if fluid retention occurs.

2. Stress Management:

- Identifying emotional triggers and learning relaxation techniques.
- Counseling or support groups for emotional well-being.

3. Follow-up Care:

- Regular cardiac check-ups to ensure full recovery.

Can It Be Prevented?

While it's impossible to avoid all emotional stress, there are steps to protect your heart:

1. **Practice relaxation:** Techniques like yoga, meditation, and deep breathing can reduce stress levels.
2. **Stay Active:** Regular exercise helps build physical and emotional resilience.
3. **Seek Emotional Support:** Talking to friends, family, or a therapist during challenging times can make a difference.
4. **Recognize Your Limits:** Avoid situations that cause overwhelming emotional or physical strain.



A Powerful Reminder

Broken Heart Syndrome serves as a striking reminder of how deeply our emotions are intertwined with our physical health. Sunita's story highlights the importance of managing stress and seeking help when overwhelmed.

If you or a loved one experiences sudden chest pain or breathlessness, never dismiss it as "just stress." Immediate medical attention can make all the difference. With timely care, the heart can heal—just as emotional wounds do—with time and support.

Your heart is not just a pump—it's a mirror of your emotions. Treat it with care.

The Impact of Antibiotics on Gut Health and How to Recover

Antibiotics are a medical marvel, saving countless lives by fighting bacterial infections. However, their use often comes with a hidden cost—disrupting the delicate balance of the gut microbiome, which can lead to digestive and immune issues.

Dr. Mamata Amonkar, a leading gastroenterologist, explains, “Antibiotics work by killing harmful bacteria, but they also affect beneficial bacteria in the gut. This disruption can result in side effects like diarrhea, bloating, and even weakened immunity.”

Let's delve into how antibiotics impact gut health and how you can help your body recover after completing a course.

What Happens to Your Gut During Antibiotic Use?

The gut microbiome is a complex community of trillions of microorganisms that are essential for digestion, immunity, and mental health. Antibiotics, while effective in eradicating harmful bacteria, often reduce the diversity of beneficial gut bacteria, creating an imbalance.

This imbalance may cause:

- Digestive Issues: Commonly diarrhea, bloating, or abdominal discomfort.
- Opportunistic Infections: A weakened microbiome can allow harmful bacteria like *Clostridium difficile* to thrive.
- Weakened Immunity: With fewer beneficial bacteria, your body's ability to fight infections may reduce.

Antibiotic Use in India

In India, antibiotics are often used indiscriminately, sometimes without a prescription. “I frequently see patients who've taken antibiotics for viral infections, where they're not even effective,” says Dr. Amonkar. “This misuse not only contributes to antibiotic resistance but also worsens gut-related side effects.”



Take Ramesh, for instance, a 35-year-old professional who took antibiotics for a sore throat. He soon developed bloating and irregular bowel movements—a classic example of the unintended consequences of antibiotic use.

Certain antibiotics are more likely to disrupt the gut microbiome, including:

1. Broad-Spectrum Antibiotics: These target a wide range of bacteria. Examples include amoxicillin, ciprofloxacin, and azithromycin.
2. Clindamycin: Known for its high risk of causing *C. difficile* infections.
3. Cephalosporins: Frequently associated with antibiotic-associated diarrhea.
4. Tetracyclines: Often linked to gut disturbances.

How to Recover Gut Health After Antibiotics

Restoring balance in your gut microbiome is vital after antibiotic use. Here are scientifically backed strategies to aid recovery:

1. Incorporate Probiotics

Probiotics replenish beneficial bacteria in your gut. Indian staples like curd (dahi), buttermilk (chaas), and fermented foods like dosa or idli batter are excellent natural sources. If symptoms persist, your doctor might recommend a probiotic supplement containing strains like *Lactobacillus acidophilus*.

2. Add Prebiotic Foods

Prebiotics, such as bananas, garlic, onions, and whole grains, feed the good bacteria and help them flourish. A traditional meal like khichdi with vegetables is a soothing, gut-friendly option.

3. Stay Hydrated

Antibiotics can lead to dehydration, especially if they cause diarrhea. Rehydrating with plain water, coconut water, or homemade oral rehydration solutions can help restore balance.



4. Avoid Gut Irritants

Fried and processed foods can aggravate gut issues. Stick to fresh, home-cooked meals with minimal oil and spices during recovery.

5. Rebuild with Fiber

Include fiber-rich foods like dals, oats, fruits, and vegetables in your diet to promote healthy digestion and support gut repair.

When to Seek Medical Advice

In most cases, gut disturbances resolve on their own within a few days. However, it is advisable to consult a doctor if symptoms persist or worsen.

Watch out for warning signs like severe diarrhea, blood in stools, or unintended weight loss. These could indicate a more serious condition that needs attention.



The Path Forward

Antibiotics remain a cornerstone of modern medicine, but their impact on gut health cannot be ignored. As Dr. Amonkar aptly puts it, “By taking proactive steps—like incorporating probiotics, prebiotics, and healthy eating habits—you can restore balance to your gut and overall health.” In India, where antibiotics are widely used, awareness about their side effects on gut health is critical. A healthy gut is not just about digestion; it’s the foundation for immunity and overall well-being.

Antibiotics should only be used when prescribed for bacterial infections. They are ineffective against viral illnesses like the common cold or flu. Avoid self-medicating, and always complete the prescribed course if antibiotics are necessary.

As an old saying goes, “Jaisa ann, waisa mann”—what you eat shapes your health and happiness. After antibiotics, give your gut the care it deserves to thrive.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR A HEALTHY HEART

Practical Tips for Lowering Blood Pressure Naturally

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a major risk factor for heart disease. Fortunately, small lifestyle changes can help lower your blood pressure naturally. Here are some practical tips:

- 1. Eat a Balanced Diet:** Focus on a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy. The DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) is effective.
- 2. Reduce Salt Intake:** Excess sodium can raise blood pressure. Limit salt to less than 2,300 mg per day (about one teaspoon), and aim for even less if possible.
- 3. Exercise Regularly:** Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise, like walking, cycling, or swimming, five times a week to strengthen your heart and lower blood pressure.
- 4. Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Losing even a few kilograms can significantly reduce your blood pressure, especially if you're overweight.
- 5. Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Proper hydration supports blood circulation and helps regulate BP.
- 6. Manage Stress:** Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing, yoga, or meditation to keep stress levels in check.
- 7. Limit Alcohol and Caffeine:** Consume alcohol in moderation and avoid excessive caffeine, which can temporarily spike your BP.



Small, consistent changes can make a big difference in managing blood pressure naturally. Always consult your doctor for personalized advice.

Q I recently noticed some blood in my stool. Should I be worried, and what could be causing this?

A Seeing blood in your stool can be alarming, and while there are several possible causes, it's always best to address it with your doctor. Blood in the stool can range from bright red to dark or black, which may give us clues about where it's coming from within your digestive system. Here are some common causes:

1. **Hemorrhoids:** These are swollen blood vessels in the rectum or anus and are one of the most common causes of bright red blood in stool. They can occur due to straining during bowel movements, constipation, or prolonged sitting. Hemorrhoids often cause itching, discomfort, and pain.
2. **Anal Fissures:** Small tears in the lining of the anus, often caused by passing hard stools or chronic constipation, can lead to blood on the toilet paper or in the stool.
3. **Diverticular Disease:** Small pouches (diverticula) can form in the wall of the colon, and if one of these pouches becomes inflamed or infected, it can cause bleeding.
4. **Gastrointestinal (GI) Infections:** Certain bacterial infections, like those caused by E. coli or salmonella, parasitic infections like amoebic colitis or viral infections like CMV colitis, can lead to blood in the stool along with symptoms like diarrhea, cramping, and fever.
5. **Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD):** Conditions like Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis cause chronic inflammation in the digestive tract, often resulting in bloody diarrhea, abdominal pain, and weight loss.
6. **Polyps or Cancer:** Polyps are growths in the colon that can bleed; some can eventually turn into colorectal cancer. Regular screening (such as a colonoscopy) is essential to catch polyps early before they become cancerous.



Dr. Mamata Amonkar

MD, DM (Gastroenterology)
Consultant Gastroenterologist

When Should You See a Doctor?

If you notice blood in your stool, especially if it persists, is accompanied by pain, weight loss, or changes in bowel habits, it's important to see a gastroenterologist. They might suggest a **colonoscopy** or other tests to find the source of the bleeding.

How is It Treated?

Treatment depends on the cause. For example, hemorrhoids might be managed with dietary changes, stool softeners, and creams, while infections require antibiotics, and IBD might need long-term medication. Early evaluation helps ensure that serious issues like polyps or cancer are identified and treated promptly.

Don't ignore blood in the stool, as early intervention can make a big difference in managing health issues effectively.

Colonoscopy

A colonoscopy is a procedure that allows doctors to get a close-up look at the inside of your colon (large intestine). This test is especially important for screening for colon cancer, as well as diagnosing a range of gastrointestinal issues. Though it may sound intimidating, a colonoscopy is a very safe and highly effective way to keep your digestive health in check.

What is colonoscopy?

During a colonoscopy, a doctor uses a thin, flexible tube with a small camera on the end, called a colonoscope, to examine the lining of the colon. The camera sends video images to a monitor, allowing the doctor to see any abnormalities, such as growths (called polyps), inflammation, or signs of bleeding.



Who Should Get a Colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy is recommended for:

- **Routine Screening:** For people over the age of 45–50, even if they have no symptoms, as colon cancer risk increases with age.
- **Family History of Colon Cancer:** Those with close relatives who had colon cancer or polyps may need to start screening earlier and undergo more frequent testing.
- **Certain Symptoms:** If you experience ongoing abdominal pain, unexplained weight loss, blood in your stool, or persistent changes in bowel habits, your doctor might recommend a colonoscopy.

Preparing for the Procedure

To get a clear view of the colon, it's essential to cleanse the intestines beforehand. This process, often called "bowel prep," typically involves:

- **Dietary Restrictions:** You'll likely be asked to avoid solid foods for a day or two and stick to clear liquids.

- **Laxatives or Enemas:** You'll take a special laxative solution to flush out the colon. This step is essential for a successful and accurate exam, as any residual stool can block the view.

What Happens During the Colonoscopy?

The procedure usually lasts 20-30 minutes and goes as follows:

1. **Sedation:** You'll receive mild sedation or anesthesia, so you're relaxed or asleep during the test.
2. **Insertion of the Colonoscope:** The doctor inserts the colonoscope through the rectum and gently advances it through the colon.
3. **Examination:** As the colonoscope moves, the doctor examines the colon for any abnormalities.
4. **Polyp Removal or Biopsy:** If the doctor sees polyps or unusual tissue, they may remove these or take a biopsy (a small tissue sample) for further testing.

What to Expect After the Procedure

After the colonoscopy, you'll need a little time to recover from the sedation. You might feel mild bloating or gas as air used to inflate the colon is released. Most people can resume their normal activities the next day. Your doctor will discuss the results with you afterward or at a follow-up appointment.

How Colonoscopies Save Lives

Colonoscopy is highly effective in detecting and removing polyps before they turn into cancer. Regular screening can reduce the risk of developing colon cancer by up to 68%. For people with a family history of colon cancer, getting screened as recommended can catch problems early and even prevent cancer from developing.

Think of a colonoscopy as a "tune-up" for your colon health. It may not be the most fun thing on your to-do list, but it's one of the most effective ways to detect potential issues early, improve treatment outcomes, and even prevent cancer. If you're over 50, have a family history of colon cancer, or experience persistent GI symptoms, ask your doctor if a colonoscopy might be right for you. HG Endoscopy and day surgery is a specialised centre which offers endoscopic procedures including a colonoscopy.

Q I have heart disease and want to stay active, but I'm worried about overdoing it. What exercises are safe for me, and how can I make sure I'm exercising the right way without putting too much strain on my heart?

A That's a fantastic question, and I'm really glad you're thinking about staying active—it's one of the best things you can do for your heart! Exercise, when done correctly, can make your heart stronger, help lower blood pressure, manage blood sugar, and even give you a big energy boost. But yes, we do want to make sure you're doing it safely. Let me break it down for you.

The Right Kind of Exercises

- **Aerobic Exercises:** Simple activities like brisk walking, swimming, or cycling are your best friends. The trick is to aim for moderate intensity—think of it as being able to talk while you move, but not sing. That way, you know you're not pushing too hard.
- **Strength Training:** You don't need to shy away from weights! Just stick to lighter ones and focus on more repetitions. Avoid heavy lifting—it's better to build strength gradually without overloading your heart.
- **Flexibility and Balance Exercises:** Yoga or stretching is a great choice, especially to unwind. Just steer clear of poses where you're holding your breath; we want to keep that blood pressure steady.

Starting Out

If it's been a while since you exercised, take it slow. Even 5-10 minutes of light activity is a great start. From there, you can build up gradually, increasing your time and intensity step by step.

Pay Attention to Your Body

This is super important—if you feel chest pain, dizziness, unusual fatigue, or shortness of breath while exercising, stop immediately. These are signs that your heart might be saying, "Take it easy," and it's always better to check in with your doctor if this happens.



Dr. Ameya Amonkar
MD, DM (Cardiology), FACC
Consultant Cardiologist

A Little Prep Goes a Long Way

Don't forget to warm up with something simple, like slow walking, before diving into your workout. And cooling down afterward—think gentle stretches—is just as important. These steps help your heart adjust smoothly before and after exercise.

How Much Exercise Should You Aim For?

A good goal is around 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week. That could look like 30 minutes a day, five days a week, or even shorter sessions spread throughout your day.

Let's Make It Personal

Before jumping into a new exercise routine, sit down with your doctor to create a plan tailored for you. You cardiac rehabilitation program, where professionals can guide and monitor your progress.

The bottom line?

Staying active with heart disease is not just safe—it's essential. With the right precautions, you'll feel more energized, healthier, and confident in no time. Let's get started on this soon!

Riddles: Think Like a Specialist: Test Your Heart and Gut Health Knowledge!

1. "I'm a silent killer that needs no knife; to keep me at bay, change your life. What am I?"
2. "I'm a pipeline, strong and straight; without me, digestion would wait. What am I?"
3. "I clean the blood; my filters are supreme, keeping your body in a balanced stream. What am I?"
4. "I may burn and rise; when I flow, discomfort flies. What am I?"
5. "I beat without stopping, day and night; to keep me strong, you must eat right. What am I?"
6. "I store bile, though I'm quite small; without me, digestion would stall. What am I?"
7. "I transport oxygen from air to you; you breathe me in and out too. What am I?"
8. "I'm a symptom of both heart and gut; treat me right, or you may get cut. What am I?"
9. "I break down food and kill germs too; acid is my specialty, it's true. What am I?"
10. "I carry blood from your feet to your head; but if I clot, you may dread. What am I?"

Winners of "Heart and Gut Crossword puzzle":

First prize: Mr Shrey Sagar

Runner-Up Prize: Mr O.P Chaturvedi

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR A HAPPY GUT

How to Keep Your Gut Healthy While Traveling

Traveling can be tough on your digestive system, but a few simple steps can help you maintain a healthy gut on the go:

1. **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water to support digestion and prevent constipation, especially during long flights or road trips. Avoid excessive caffeine or alcohol, which can dehydrate you.
2. **Pack Healthy Snacks:** Carry gut-friendly snacks like nuts, fruits, or whole-grain crackers to avoid processed or greasy foods that can upset your stomach.
3. **Eat Mindfully:** Try not to overindulge in unfamiliar foods. Introduce new cuisines slowly to give your gut time to adjust.
4. **Choose Probiotics:** Bring along probiotic supplements or consume probiotic-rich foods like yogurt or fermented drinks to support your gut microbiome.
5. **Practice Good Hygiene:** Wash your hands frequently, especially before meals, to avoid foodborne illnesses.
6. **Stay Active:** Light exercise, such as walking or stretching, can improve digestion and prevent bloating after meals.
7. **Stick to Your Routine:** Whenever possible, eat meals at regular intervals and avoid skipping meals to keep your digestive system steady.
8. **Pack Over-the-Counter Medications:**
 - Antacids: For heartburn or acid reflux.
 - Loperamide: To manage diarrhea.



- Laxatives: For constipation relief (opt for gentle ones).
- Simethicone: For relief from gas and bloating.
- Electrolyte Sachets: To stay hydrated in case of diarrhea or excessive sweating.

With these tips, you can keep your gut happy and healthy while enjoying your travels. If digestive issues arise, stay hydrated and consider simple remedies like herbal teas

Riddles: Think Like a Specialist

Grand Prize:

A full cardiac health check-up at our clinic, including blood tests, ECG, and consultation with our cardiologist. This prize will go to the participant who answers all 11 questions correctly. In the case of multiple winners, we'll conduct a lucky draw.

Runner-Up Prize:

For one lucky participant who get at least 8 out of 10 answers correct, we'll offer a 100% discount on any one diagnostic test (Echocardiogram, or stress test) at our clinic by a lucky draw

How to Enter:

Submit your answers by 15th December, 2024 via email to hgsuperspecialityclinic@gmail.com or Whatsapp to 9653404007 with the subject line "Heart and Gut Crossword puzzle." Winners will be notified within a week and prizes must be claimed within 30 days.

THE WELLNESS PLATE

Quinoa and Masoor Dal Khichdi

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup quinoa, rinsed and soaked for 15 minutes
- 1/2 cup masoor dal (red lentils), rinsed and soaked for 15 minutes
- 1/2 cup mixed vegetables (carrot, green peas, bell pepper), chopped
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 small tomato, chopped
- 1-2 green chilies, slit (optional)
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/4 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/4 tsp asafoetida (hing)
- 1/2 tsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1 tbsp olive oil or a small amount of ghee
- Salt to taste Fresh coriander leaves for garnish



Instructions:

- In a pressure cooker or a large pot, heat olive oil or ghee on medium heat. Add cumin seeds and let them splutter. Add asafoetida, green chilies, and ginger-garlic paste, sautéing briefly.
- Add the chopped onion and cook until golden. Then add the chopped tomato and turmeric powder, cooking until the tomato softens.
- Add the soaked quinoa, masoor dal, mixed vegetables, and salt. Stir to combine.
- Pour in 2.5 cups of water and mix well.
- If using a pressure cooker, cook for 3-4 whistles or until the quinoa and dal are soft. For a pot, cover and cook on low heat until the quinoa and lentils are tender and water is absorbed (about 20-25 minutes).
- Once cooked, let the pressure release naturally, then fluff the khichdi with a spoon.
- Garnish with fresh coriander leaves and serve hot. Enjoy it with a side of yogurt or a light cucumber salad for added texture and nutrition.

Health Benefits:

- **High in Protein and Fiber:** Quinoa and red lentils provide protein and fiber, promoting satiety and stable blood sugar levels.
- **Heart-Healthy Fats:** A small amount of ghee adds healthy fats without overloading on saturated fats.
- **Rich in Antioxidants and Vitamins:** The mixed vegetables and spices like turmeric add antioxidants and essential vitamins.

SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT

Sitting Too Much Can Harm Your Heart

A recent study published in JACC highlights that prolonged sitting or lying down daily can significantly increase the risk of heart failure and cardiovascular death. Researchers tracked the daily activity of 89,530 participants, aged 62 on average, using wearable accelerometers. Over eight years, 4.9% developed irregular heartbeats (atrial fibrillation), 2.1% experienced heart failure, and nearly 1% died from heart-related causes.

The study identified **10.6 hours of sitting or inactivity as a critical threshold, beyond which the risk of heart failure and cardiovascular death rises sharply**. This risk persisted even in those meeting the weekly recommendation of 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. However, replacing just 30 minutes of sitting daily with light or moderate movement reduced these risks significantly, with light activity lowering heart failure risk by 6% and vigorous activity cutting cardiovascular mortality risk by 10%. This study emphasizes the importance of staying active throughout the day, not just during exercise, to protect heart health.



Ezimamaka Ajufo et al., Accelerometer-Measured Sedentary Behavior and Risk of Future Cardiovascular Disease, Journal of the American College of Cardiology, 2024. DOI: 10.1016/j.jacc.2024.10.065

A Simpler Diet for IBS Relief?

A study from Lund University, Sweden, suggests that reducing sugar and starch in your diet may ease symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) just as effectively as the commonly recommended Low FODMAP diet. IBS is a condition marked by abdominal pain, bloating, and irregular bowel habits, such as diarrhea or constipation.

The study, led by Professor Bodil Ohlsson, compared two diets: the starch- and sucrose-reduced diet (SSRD) and the Low FODMAP diet. **SSRD focuses on cutting down sugars, starches, and highly processed foods but is less restrictive and easier to follow.**

In contrast, the Low FODMAP diet eliminates gluten, lactose, and specific food groups known to trigger symptoms. Over four weeks, 155 IBS patients were randomly assigned to one of the two diets. Remarkably, **both diets improved symptoms in 75-80%** of participants. Those on SSRD also experienced more weight loss and reduced sugar cravings. According to the researchers, SSRD isn't just a diet for IBS—it's a sustainable way of eating that anyone can adopt. It allows occasional indulgences, making it more practical for everyday life.



Bodil Roth et al., A Starch- and Sucrose-Reduced Diet Has Similar Efficiency as Low FODMAP in IBS—A Randomized Non-Inferiority Study, Nutrients, 2024. DOI: 10.3390/nu16173039

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- **The Post-COVID Heart: What We've Learned So Far**
- **Gallstones Demystified: When Should You Worry?**
- **Decoding diagnostics - Dobutamine Stress Echo**
- **Practical tips for managing constipation**
- **Ask the doctor- Is it safe to fly on a plane if I have heart disease?**
- **Ask the doctor- Does having frequent nausea mean having something serious?**