



# Heart and Gut Health Digest

**ISSUE #5**      JAN 2025

**Dear Readers,**

Happy New Year! As we step into 2025, we want to thank you for your continued patronage and support of our newsletter. Your engagement inspires us to keep bringing you valuable insights into heart and gut health.

We're excited to share that our **YouTube channel, HG Cardiowise**, is now live—marking a significant milestone in our mission to provide reliable heart health education through digital platforms. This year, we're also launching two innovative programs:

- A **Remote Cardiac Rehabilitation Program** to help heart patients recover and thrive from the comfort of their homes.
- A **Holistic IBS Management Program** designed for effective, long-term relief.

Here's to a year full of health and wellness! Stay with us as we continue to empower you with knowledge and care.

Warm regards,  
Team Heart and Gut Health Digest

*Dr Aneya Anenkar & Dr Manata Anenkar*

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## Heart Health for Women: Understanding Unique Risks

Heart disease is often thought of as a man's problem, but the truth is, cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death among women worldwide, including in India. Despite this, awareness about women's unique heart health risks remains low.

Women often experience different symptoms, risk factors, and disease progression than men, making it vital to understand these differences.

### The Overlooked Issue

In India, cultural norms often prioritize women as caregivers, placing their health on the back burner. Combined with busy schedules and the dual responsibilities of work and home, many women delay seeking medical attention, even when symptoms arise

### Unique Risk Factors for Women

#### 1. Hormonal Influence

Estrogen offers some protection against heart disease during the reproductive years, but this protection diminishes after menopause. The risk of CVD rises significantly in postmenopausal women.



### 2. Pregnancy-Related Conditions

Complications like gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, or hypertension during pregnancy increase a woman's lifetime risk of heart disease.

### 3. Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

PCOS, common among Indian women, is associated with insulin resistance, obesity, and an increased risk of heart disease.

### 4. Stress and Mental Health

Indian women often juggle multiple roles, leading to higher stress levels. Chronic stress, anxiety, and depression—more common in women than men—can increase the risk of CVD.

### 5. Lifestyle Challenges

**Sedentary Lifestyle:** Many women neglect regular exercise due to time constraints.

**Dietary Habits:** High carbohydrate diets, excessive fried food, and low fiber intake are common in Indian households and contribute to obesity and high cholesterol.

## Symptoms Women Shouldn't Ignore

Unlike the classic “crushing chest pain” seen in men, women often present with subtler symptoms such as:

- Fatigue or weakness
- Shortness of breath
- Pain or discomfort in the neck, jaw, shoulder, or back
- Nausea or indigestion
- Unexplained anxiety

These symptoms are often misattributed to stress or gastric issues, delaying diagnosis and treatment



## Preventive Measures

### 1. Regular Check-Ups

Schedule annual health screenings, including blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood sugar tests. Women with pregnancy-related complications should discuss their cardiovascular risk with a doctor.

### 2. Adopt a Heart-Healthy Diet

- Incorporate whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and legumes.
- Choose healthy fats like those in nuts, seeds, and mustard or olive oil.
- Avoid excessive fried foods and high-sodium packaged snacks.

### 3. Stay Active

Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity daily. Yoga, walking, or even traditional dance forms can help improve cardiovascular fitness.

### 4. Manage Stress

- Practice mindfulness, meditation, or deep breathing.
- Share responsibilities and seek support when needed.
- Quit Smoking and Limit Alcohol. Both increase the risk of heart disease significantly.



## The Importance of Awareness

Studies reveal that Indian women are less likely to recognize heart attack symptoms and seek timely help. Educating women about their unique risks and symptoms can save lives.

## Ladies, Take Charge of Your Heart Health

Women's heart health is as important as any other aspect of well-being. By prioritizing self-care, recognizing risk factors, and committing to regular health check-ups, you can significantly lower your risk of cardiovascular disease.

Let's break the myth that heart disease is a man's disease and empower women to take charge of their heart health—because every beat matters.



# Colon Cancer Prevention: What You Need to Know



Colon cancer, also called colorectal cancer, is one of the fastest-growing health concerns in India. Traditionally more common in the West, it has gained prominence in India due to urbanization, dietary shifts, and lifestyle changes. The good news? Colon cancer is not only preventable but also highly treatable when detected early. Let's dive into what you need to know about colon cancer prevention, including symptoms, risk factors, and the critical role of screenings.

## What is Colon Cancer?

Colon cancer begins in the large intestine (colon) or rectum. Most cases start as benign polyps—small growths on the lining of the colon—which can become cancerous over time if left untreated. Detecting and removing these polyps early can stop cancer before it starts.

## Symptoms to Watch For

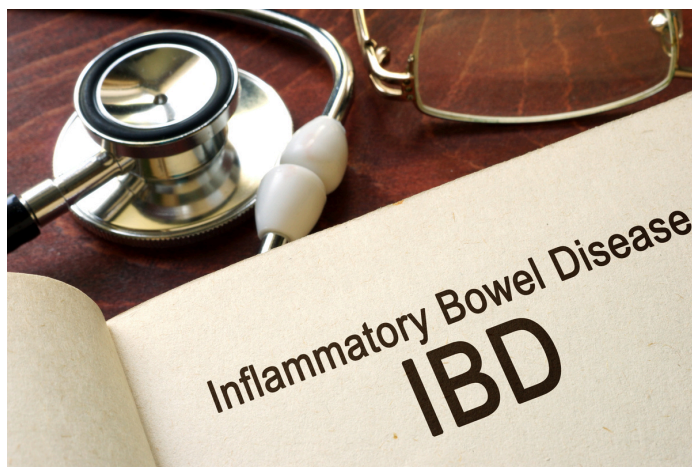
Colon cancer often develops silently, showing no symptoms in its early stages. However, as it progresses, you may experience:

- **Changes in Bowel Habits:** Persistent diarrhea, constipation, or a change in stool consistency lasting more than a few weeks.



- **Rectal Bleeding or Blood in Stools:** Bright red blood or dark stools could indicate bleeding in the colon.
- **Unexplained Weight Loss:** Sudden, unintended weight loss could signal a more serious issue.
- **Abdominal Discomfort:** Cramping, bloating, or a feeling that your bowel isn't completely empty.
- **Fatigue and Weakness:** Chronic blood loss may lead to anemia, leaving you feeling unusually tired.

These symptoms aren't exclusive to colon cancer but should prompt a visit to your doctor.



## Understanding Risk Factors

Your risk of colon cancer depends on several factors:

1. **Age:** While colon cancer is more common after age 50, younger individuals in India are increasingly being diagnosed.
2. **Diet:** High consumption of red and processed meats, coupled with low fiber intake, raises risk.
3. **Lifestyle:** Sedentary habits, obesity, smoking, and alcohol consumption contribute to higher risk.
4. **Family History:** A history of colon cancer or polyps in close relatives increases your likelihood of developing the disease.
5. **Chronic Conditions:** Individuals with inflammatory bowel diseases like Crohn's or ulcerative colitis are at higher risk.

## The Role of Screening Colonoscopy

One of the most powerful tools in colon cancer prevention is a screening colonoscopy.

### What Is It?

A colonoscopy is a procedure in which a flexible tube with a camera examines the colon



and rectum. It not only identifies cancer early but also allows doctors to remove polyps during the same procedure.

### When Should You Get Screened?

- Start at age 50 for most people.
- If you have a family history of colon cancer, begin screening earlier (10 years before the youngest case in your family).
- For individuals with inflammatory bowel disease, your doctor may recommend more frequent screenings.

### How Effective Is It?

Colonoscopies are highly effective in reducing colon cancer incidence and mortality. Detecting polyps early prevents them from becoming cancerous, and identifying cancer at an early stage greatly improves survival rates.

### Lifestyle Changes for Prevention

#### 1. Adopt a High-Fiber Diet

Fiber promotes healthy digestion and reduces the time harmful substances stay in contact with the colon lining. Indian Options: Whole wheat chapatis, brown rice, lentils, leafy greens, seasonal fruits like papaya, guava, and bananas.

#### 2. Limit Red and Processed Meats

Reduce consumption of mutton, sausages, and processed meats. Choose lean proteins like fish, chicken, and legumes.

#### 3. Stay Physically Active

Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate activity daily. A brisk walk, yoga, or even household chores like gardening or dancing can count as exercise.

#### 4. Quit Tobacco and Limit Alcohol

Both significantly increase your risk of colon cancer and other gastrointestinal cancers.

#### 5. Stay Hydrated

Drinking plenty of water aids digestion and prevents constipation, reducing stress on the colon.

### Early Detection Saves Lives

Regular screenings can make all the difference in catching colon cancer early. If you experience any symptoms or have risk factors, don't wait—schedule a visit with your gastroenterologist. Early detection not only improves survival but also ensures less invasive treatment options.

Colon cancer doesn't have to be a silent killer. By staying informed, adopting a healthy lifestyle, and prioritizing regular screenings, you can significantly lower your risk. Encourage your family and friends to do the same, and together, let's make colon cancer prevention a priority. Remember, prevention starts with awareness, and your health is in your hands.



Our YouTube channel is now Live! Subscribe to our channel at [www.youtube.com/DrAmonkar\\_HGCardiowise](http://www.youtube.com/DrAmonkar_HGCardiowise) and watch our introductory video where Dr Amonkar explains the vision behind HG CardioWise





### Fibroscan of the liver

The liver is a powerhouse organ, critical for detoxification, digestion, and producing essential proteins. However, liver diseases, especially those associated with fat accumulation, can have far-reaching consequences, including an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. A Fibroscan, an advanced diagnostic tool, offers a non-invasive way to assess liver health and estimate fat content, providing valuable insights into both liver and cardiovascular risk.

#### What is Fibroscan?

Fibroscan, or transient elastography, is a non-invasive diagnostic test that evaluates two key aspects of liver health:

1. **Liver Stiffness:** Indicates fibrosis or scarring caused by chronic damage.
2. **Fat Content (CAP):** (Controlled Attenuation Parameter - CAP): Estimates the amount of fat in the liver, a condition known as steatosis.

#### Why Is Fat Content Important?

Excess fat in the liver is associated with conditions like Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (**NAFLD**) and Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis (**NASH**). NAFLD is increasingly common due to rising obesity rates and unhealthy lifestyles. This condition doesn't just harm the liver—it significantly raises the risk of:

- Atherosclerosis: Fatty deposits in blood vessels.
- Hypertension: High blood pressure.
- Coronary Artery Disease: Narrowing of heart arteries.

Detecting and managing liver fat early can help reduce cardiovascular risk.

#### Why Is Liver Stiffness Important?

Liver stiffness is a key indicator of liver fibrosis, which occurs when the liver is damaged and scar tissue replaces healthy tissue. Over time, untreated fibrosis can progress to cirrhosis or even liver failure. Fibroscan helps detect these changes early, enabling timely intervention.

#### When Is a Fibroscan Recommended?

A Fibroscan might be advised if you have:

- Fatty Liver Disease (alcoholic or non-alcoholic)
- Chronic Hepatitis B or C
- Obesity or Diabetes
- Excessive Alcohol Consumption
- Elevated Liver Enzymes in routine blood tests

#### What to Expect During the Test

1. **Preparation:** No special preparation is needed,

though fasting for a few hours is often recommended.

2. **Procedure:** You lie on your back, and a small probe is placed on your skin over the liver area.

3. **Duration:** The test takes 5–10 minutes and is entirely painless.

#### Understanding the Results

##### 1. Liver Stiffness:

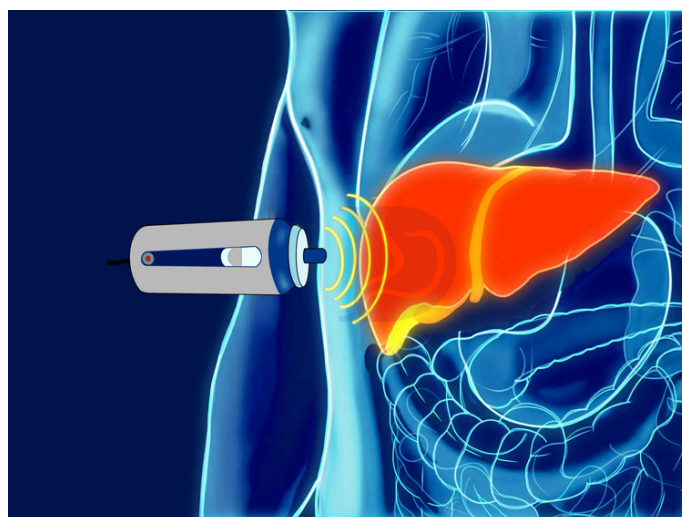
- Low stiffness = Healthy liver.
- Moderate stiffness = Early fibrosis; may need treatment or lifestyle changes.
- High stiffness = Advanced fibrosis or cirrhosis, requiring close monitoring.

##### 2. Fat Content (CAP):

- Normal CAP values = Minimal fat accumulation.
- Elevated CAP values = Indicate fatty liver, signaling increased cardiovascular risk.

#### Advantages of Fibroscan

- Non-Invasive: No needles or surgery involved.
- Quick and Painless: A comfortable outpatient procedure.
- Accurate and Reliable: Helps guide treatment decisions and monitor disease progression.



#### Limitations to Consider

- May be less accurate in patients with severe obesity.
- Doesn't measure liver inflammation; additional tests may be needed.

#### Takeaway

Fibroscan is a cutting-edge tool in the fight against liver disease and its systemic effects, including cardiovascular risks. If you have risk factors like obesity, diabetes, or a history of fatty liver, Fibroscan is right for you.

**Q** I've been experiencing frequent nausea for a while. Should I see a doctor, or is it something I can manage on my own?

**A** While occasional nausea is common and often manageable with home remedies, frequent or persistent nausea can indicate an underlying issue, particularly if it disrupts your daily life or is accompanied by other symptoms.

**Nausea can result from a variety of causes:**

- Digestive conditions like gastritis (inflammation of the stomach lining), acid reflux (GERD), gallstones, or peptic ulcers.
- Non-digestive causes such as migraines, certain medications, hormonal changes (e.g., pregnancy), or even stress.
- Serious concerns such as liver or pancreatic disorders or, in some cases, heart issues, particularly if nausea is paired with chest pain, sweating, or shortness of breath.

**When to see a gastroenterologist:**

Consult a gastroenterologist if your nausea persists for several days, worsens over time, or comes with warning signs like:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Vomiting blood or black tarry stools (malaena)
- Upper abdominal pain or jaundice (yellowing of the skin)
- Fever or dark-colored urine

Your doctor will likely ask detailed questions about your symptoms, such as when they occur, what seems to trigger them, and any associated discomfort. Depending on your history, they may recommend diagnostic tests like blood work, ultrasound, or endoscopy to identify the root cause.

**What you can do in the meantime:**

- Eat small, frequent meals to avoid overwhelming your stomach or letting it stay empty too long.



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- Avoid trigger foods, particularly those that are fatty, spicy, or acidic.
- Stay hydrated with water, clear fluids, or ginger tea, especially if vomiting has occurred.
- Try over-the-counter remedies like antacids for mild acid reflux or nausea. If these measures don't bring relief, or if your symptoms worsen, it's important to seek medical advice. Addressing the issue early can prevent complications, ensure appropriate treatment, and help you feel better faster.

## PRACTICAL TIPS FOR A HEALTHY HEART

### Snacks that love your heart

Snacking doesn't have to derail your heart health. With Indian flavors and locally available ingredients, you can create tasty and heart-friendly options. Opt for fresh, unprocessed ingredients and limit added salt or sugar

#### 1. Roasted Chana (Chickpeas)

- Why: Roasted chana is a high-protein, high-fiber snack that keeps cholesterol levels in check.
- How: Enjoy plain roasted chana or mix it with spices, lemon juice, and chopped onions for a tangy twist.

#### 2. Nuts and Seeds

- Why: Almonds, walnuts, and sunflower seeds are excellent sources of healthy fats and omega-3 fatty acids.
- How: Enjoy a small handful or make a mix of almonds, peanuts, and pumpkin seeds with light spices.

#### 3. Sprouts Chaat

- Why: Sprouts like moong dal are rich in plant-based protein and fiber, which reduce cholesterol and promote heart health.
- How: Toss boiled sprouts with tomatoes, cucumbers, and a squeeze of lemon.



#### 4. Steamed Corn or Makai

- Why: Corn is high in fiber and naturally cholesterol-free.
- How: Steam fresh corn kernels and season with lime juice, chaat masala, and a pinch of black salt.

#### 5. Khakhra or Multigrain Crackers

- Why: Khakhra made from whole grains is low in fat and high in fiber, perfect for heart-conscious snacking.
- How: Spread with homemade mint chutney or low-fat yogurt.



# 2025

## Snacks that love your heart

### 6. Fresh Seasonal Fruits

- Why: Fruits like guava, papaya, pomegranate, and oranges are rich in antioxidants and vitamin C, which benefit heart health.
- How: Pair with a sprinkle of black salt or chaat masala for added flavor.

### 7. Poha or Upma with Veggies

- Why: These light and wholesome snacks, made from flattened rice or semolina, are low in fat and can be made nutrient-rich with vegetables.
- How: Cook with curry leaves, mustard seeds, carrots, peas, and onions for added heart-friendly benefits.

### 8. Buttermilk (Chaas)

- Why: Low-fat buttermilk is rich in probiotics, which support digestion and heart health.
- How: Add a pinch of roasted cumin powder, salt, and coriander for flavor.

### 9. Dark Chocolate and Dates

- Why: Dark chocolate (70% cocoa or more) provides antioxidants, while dates are natural sweeteners loaded with potassium.
- How: Combine a small piece of dark chocolate with a few dates for a sweet yet healthy treat.

## THE WELLNESS PLATE

### Banana-Cinnamon Chia Pudding

#### Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons chia seeds
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 1 ripe banana
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon powder
- 1 teaspoon honey or jaggery (optional)
- 1 tablespoon chopped walnuts or almonds for garnish

#### Instructions:

1. Soak chia seeds in milk and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight until it thickens to a pudding-like consistency.
2. Mash the banana and mix it with the soaked chia seeds. Add cinnamon powder and honey/jaggery, if using.
3. Serve chilled, topped with chopped nuts for a crunchy texture.

#### Why it's heart-healthy:

Chia seeds are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and fiber, which are excellent for cardiovascular health. Banana adds potassium to regulate blood pressure, and cinnamon helps stabilize blood sugar levels.





## SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT

### **Prolonged Sitting and Increased Risk of Heart Failure**

A significant study published in *Circulation: Heart Failure* highlights the risks associated with prolonged sedentary behavior. Researchers analyzed data from over 82,000 men aged 45 and older and found that individuals with the highest sedentary time had a 34% higher risk of developing heart failure compared to those with the lowest sedentary time. This association held true even after accounting for levels of physical activity, emphasizing that reducing sedentary behavior is as important as increasing exercise for heart health.

The findings stress the importance of integrating movement into daily routines. Actions like standing frequently, taking short walks, or incorporating light activities throughout the day can play a vital role in mitigating these risks.



Chomistek, A. K., Manson, J. E., Stefanick, M. L., et al. (2018). Sedentary Behavior and Risk of Heart Failure. *Circulation: Heart Failure*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1161/CIRCHEARTFAILURE.117.004580>

### **Link Between Gut Microbiome and Liver Disease Progression**

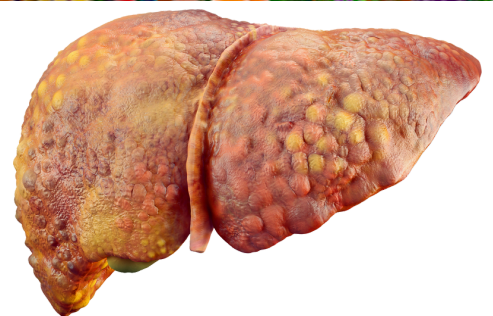
The gut microbiome continues to capture attention as research uncovers its profound impact on liver health. Recent studies suggest that an imbalance in gut bacteria (dysbiosis) plays a crucial role in the progression of chronic liver diseases, including non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) and cirrhosis.

A groundbreaking study published in *Nature Reviews Gastroenterology & Hepatology* highlights that certain harmful gut bacteria can produce toxins, contributing to liver inflammation and fibrosis. Additionally, these microbes can alter bile acid metabolism, further exacerbating liver damage.

In Indian populations, where NAFLD prevalence is rising due to increasing obesity and metabolic syndrome, understanding this gut-liver axis holds promise.

Researchers are now exploring microbiome-targeted therapies, including probiotics, prebiotics, and fecal microbiota transplantation (FMT), to halt or reverse liver disease progression.

Bajaj, J. S., et al. (2023). The gut-liver axis in chronic liver disease. *Nature Reviews Gastroenterology & Hepatology*.



## WHATS COMING NEXT.....

- **Stress and Heart Health: Unraveling the Connection**
- **Acidity and GERD: Simple Solutions to a Common Problem**
- **Decoding diagnostics - Echocardiography: A window to your heart**
- **Practical tips : Stay hydrated for a healthy gut**
- **Ask the doctor- Why Do I Feel Dizzy? Could It Be My Heart?**