

# Wellness

FIRST MUTUAL  
HEALTH

FEBRUARY 2022



- Heart Diseases.
- Drug Problems.
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.
- February the month of love.

# HEART DISEASES

It's amazing how time flies we are already in the second month of the year!! We hope that you are finding balance between personal, work and family needs which might cause stress especially at the beginning of the year as you push your plans into action. Inevitably, we do encounter some stressful moments which can be managed and controlled before the situation degenerates into a bigger problem which might affect your health. As your health insurer of choice we care for you and will continue sharing different health and wellness nuggets in the monthly newsletters as we progress with year 2022. In this issue we will unpack issues to do with heart diseases, drug abuse, chronic fatigue syndrome and unavoidably the topic of love and we invite you to read on!

## What to know about Heart Diseases

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the world. The heart can be affected by a range of conditions that can be prevented or treated with healthy lifestyle choices and managing risks that are associated with the heart. Heart disease describes a number of conditions that can affect the normal functions of a healthy heart.

### These include:

- Heart valve disease
- Heart infection
- Congenital heart defects that one is born with
- Heart rhythm problems (arrhythmias)
- Blood vessel disease, such as coronary artery disease

## Heart Disease Symptoms

One might experience any of the following symptoms, when suffering from heart disease:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in the upper body
- Shortness of breath

## Heart Disease Risk Factors

- Lack of physical activity and sleep
- Hereditary
- Excessive alcohol intake
- Smoking, as well as second hand smoke

## Heart disease preventive methods

- There are certain types of heart conditions that cannot be prevented. However, there are some conditions that can be prevented through adopting a certain lifestyle that can help improve the health of the heart.

## Quit Smoking

- Quitting smoking can be tough but it has multiple health related benefits and is known to be one of the biggest causes of heart diseases. Studies indicate that people exposed to second hand smoke have a 25 – 30% chance of developing heart disease. Nonsmokers who have high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol have an even greater risk of developing heart disease when they're exposed to second hand smoke. The chemicals released from cigarette smoke promote the development of plaque buildup in the arteries.

## Exercise Daily

- The heart is a muscle and like any other muscle in the body, it also requires regular exercise for it to stay healthy. Being physically active is a major step towards having a healthy heart. Regular exercise improves circulation which lowers blood pressure, cardiac output (how well the heart pumps) and heart rate. Brisk walking, running, swimming, cycling, playing tennis and skipping rope are forms of exercise that



are good for the heart. Heart pumping aerobic exercise is the kind that doctors have in mind when they recommend at least 150 minutes per week of moderate activity.

## Maintain a Healthy Weight

Losing weight is more than generic diets and exercise. You need to find what works for you and diligently pursue the goal. You can contact your doctor and be guided accordingly, in order to get the right amount of exercise and diet beneficial for your heart as well as your health in line with your Body Mass Index (BMI).

- If your BMI is less than 18.5, it falls within the underweight range.
- If your BMI is 18.5 to 24.9, it falls within the normal or healthy weight range.
- If your BMI is 25.0 to 29.9, it falls within the overweight range.
- If your BMI is 30.0 or higher, it falls within the obese range.
- Good Dental Health  
Dental health is a good indicator of overall health, including the heart. Because those who suffer from periodontal (gum) disease often have the same risk factors for heart disease. Studies have shown that bacteria in the mouth that causes gum disease, can move into the blood stream and cause an elevation in C-reactive protein, a marker for inflammation in the blood vessels. This can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke. It is therefore important to maintain good dental health.
- Avoid sitting for too long

Research suggests that sitting for too long is not good for the heart, no matter how much exercise you do. Sitting for too long (especially long trips) increases the risk of blood clots. Experts advise mobility every now and then. You can park some metres away from the office and take short walks during the day to avoid sitting for too long.

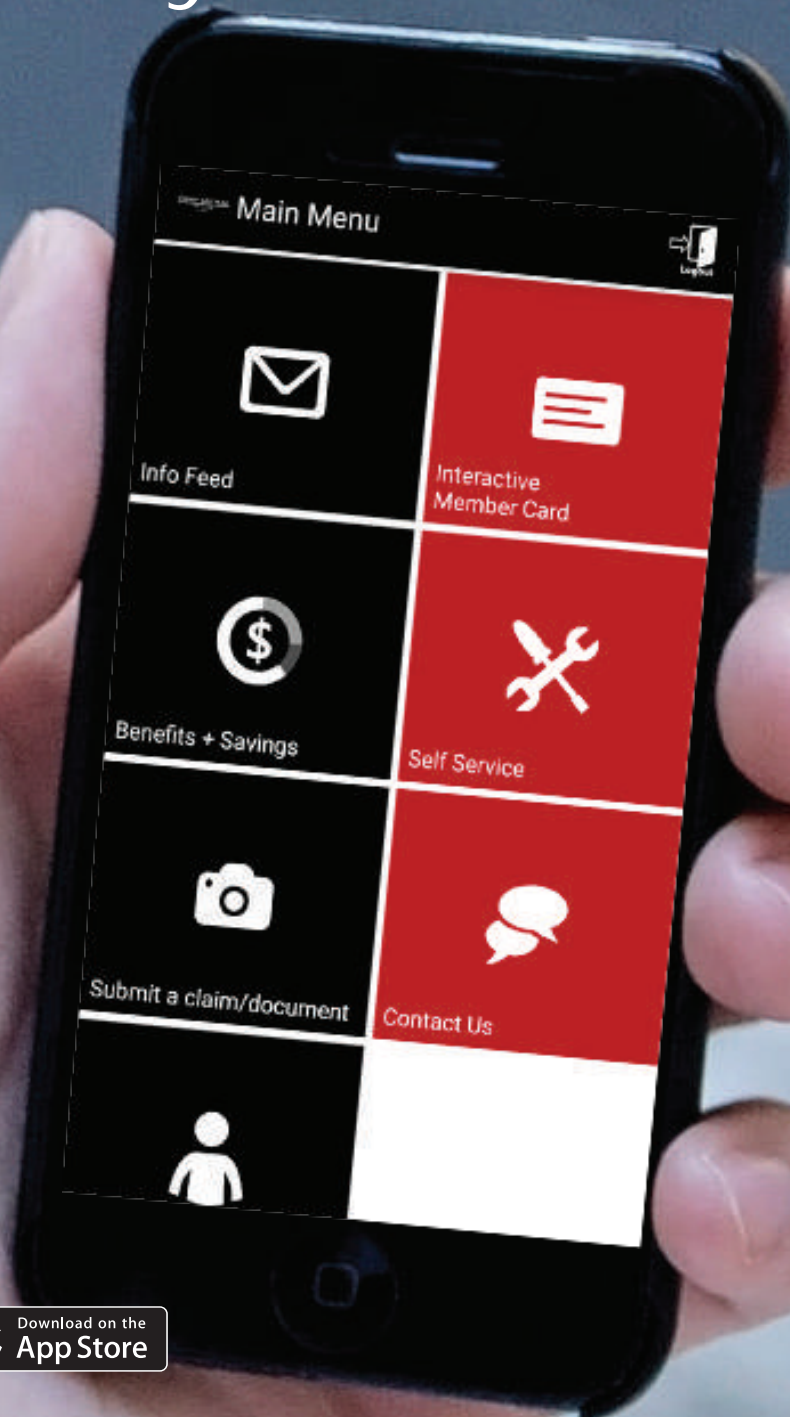
- Get Enough Sleep  
Sleep is an essential part of having a healthy heart. Not getting enough sleep increases the risk for cardiovascular disease regardless of age or other health habits. Sleeping less than 6 hours per night increases the risk for heart diseases. Researchers believe sleeping too little causes disruptions in underlying health conditions and biological processes, including blood pressure and inflammation. Having at least 7 – 8 hours of sleep keeps one healthy.
- Less alcohol

Excessive alcohol intake can affect the heart by increasing blood pressure, causing abnormal heart rhythms and in the long run, damage the heart muscle. However, a little red wine may be a heart-healthy choice and here is why?

- Rich in antioxidants.
- Lowers bad cholesterol.
- Keeps heart healthy.
- Regulates blood sugar.
- Helps treat common cold.
- Keeps memory sharp.

Reference  
*Mayo Clinic*

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# Dealing with Drug Problems

Drug abuse can be a painful experience—for the person who has the problem, and for family and friends who may feel helpless in the face of the disease. However, there are things you can do if you know or suspect that someone close to you has a drug problem.

Certain drugs can change the structure and inner workings of the brain. With repeated use, they affect a person's self-control and interfere with the ability to resist the urge to take the drug. Not being able to stop taking a drug even though you know its harmful is the hallmark of addiction.

A drug doesn't have to be illegal to cause this effect. People can become addicted to alcohol, nicotine, or even prescription drugs when they use them in ways other than prescribed or use someone else's prescription. People are particularly vulnerable to using drugs when going through major life transitions. For adults, this might mean during a divorce or after losing a job. For children and teens, this can mean changing schools or other major upheavals in their lives and may experiment with drug use for many different reasons. It could be availability of drugs as they interact with other students and parents may need to pay more attention to their children during these periods.

The teenage years are a critical time to prevent drug use. Trying drugs as a teenager increases your chance of developing substance use disorders. The earlier the age of first use, the higher the risk of later addiction. But addiction also happens to adults. Adults are at increased risk of addiction when they encounter prescription pain-relieving drugs after a surgery or because of a chronic pain problem. People with a history of addiction should be particularly careful with opioid pain relievers and make sure to tell their doctors about past drug use.

There are many signs that may indicate a loved one is having a problem with drugs. They might lose interest in things that they used to enjoy or start to isolate themselves. Teens' grades may drop and they may start skipping classes.

If a loved one is using drugs, encourage them to talk to their primary care doctor. It can be easier to have this conversation with a doctor than a family member. Not all drug treatment requires long stays in residential treatment centres. For someone in the early stages of a substance use problem, a conversation with a doctor or another professional may be enough to get them the help they need. Doctors can help the person think about their drug use, understand the risk for addiction, and come up with a plan for change.

Substance use disorder can often be treated on an outpatient basis. But that doesn't mean it's easy to treat. Substance use disorder is a complicated disease. Drugs can cause changes in the brain that make it extremely difficult to quit without medical help.

For certain substances, it can be dangerous to stop the drug without medical intervention. Some people may need to be in a hospital for a short time for detoxification, when the drug leaves their body. This can help keep them as safe and comfortable as possible. Patients should talk with their doctors about medications that treat addiction to alcohol or opioids, such as heroin and prescription pain relievers.

Recovering from a substance use disorder requires retraining the brain. A person who's been addicted to drugs will have to relearn all sorts of things, from what to do when they're bored to who to hang out with.

A substance use problem is a chronic disease that requires lifestyle adjustments and long-term treatment, like diabetes or high blood



pressure. Even relapse can be a normal part of the process—not a sign of failure, but a sign that the treatment needs to be adjusted. With good care, people who have substance use disorders can live healthy, productive lives.

## Physical signs of drug abuse

### PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Side effects can include slight alterations to physical appearance that may start to become noticeable. Bloodshot or red eyes and pinpoint or dilated pupils are all telling signs of many types of drug abuse. Also, pay attention to skin texture and complexion. Frequent abnormal puffiness and flushed or washed-out colour can also indicate ongoing abuse of drugs or alcohol. If you notice any of the following, it could be signs of a hidden condition:

- Persistent itching in a specific area of the body
- Impulsive pulling down of sleeves to hide marks
- Slurred speech
- Frequent sniffing

While these are not definitive signs, if they are accompanied by secretive-ness or defensiveness, they could provide helpful clues as to whether something is wrong.

### OVERALL APPEARANCE

Long-term abuse of drugs and alcohol can result in drastic changes to physical appearance. Many drugs have appetite suppressing or other altering side effects, meaning abuse often results in visible weight changes. These rapid changes to body composition, such as sudden weight loss or weight gain, or lack of interest in personal grooming, especially if it declines without explanation, can also point to substance abuse and can be cause for concern.

### EQUIPMENT

It can be an obvious indicator if you find equipment in someone's room or among their things. Some common items include:

- Cigarette wrapping papers
- Pipes
- Syringes
- Cut-up straws
- Soiled cotton swabs
- Lighters
- Burnt spoons or bottle caps
- Razor blades
- "Cutting" surfaces like mirrors or glass

Not all drugs require equipment to use them, but you might see other items that point to misuse. For example, medicine bottles from more than one doctor can be a sign of prescription drug abuse.

People can use eyewash to hide the effect of bloodshot eyes – and while this is not a definite indicator, abnormal amounts can be a clue. Depending on many factors, someone struggling with addiction might go to great lengths to hide the physical signs or treat the symptoms with total apathy.

<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/>

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# Unpacking Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

You might be feeling tired all the time and do not realise that you could be suffering from Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), a complicated disorder characterised by extreme fatigue that lasts for at least six months and that can't be fully explained by an underlying medical condition. The fatigue worsens with physical or mental activity, but doesn't improve with rest.

## Other characteristic symptoms include:

- Sleep that isn't refreshing
- Difficulties with memory, focus and concentration
- Dizziness that worsens with moving from lying down or sitting to standing

This condition is also known as myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME). Sometimes it's abbreviated as ME/CFS. The most recent term proposed is systemic exertional intolerance disease (SEID).

The cause of chronic fatigue syndrome is unknown, although there are many theories — ranging from viral infections to psychological stress. Some experts believe chronic fatigue syndrome might be triggered by a combination of factors.

There's no single test to confirm a diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome. You may need a variety of medical tests to rule out other health problems that have similar symptoms. Treatment for chronic fatigue syndrome focuses on improving symptoms.

## Symptoms

Symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome can vary from person to person, and the severity of symptoms can fluctuate from day to day. Signs and symptoms may include:

- Fatigue
- Problems with memory or concentration
- Sore throat
- Headaches
- Enlarged lymph nodes in your neck or armpits
- Unexplained muscle or joint pain
- Dizziness that worsens with moving from lying down or sitting to standing
- Unrefreshing sleep
- Extreme exhaustion after physical or mental exercise

## When to see a doctor

Fatigue can be a symptom of many illnesses, such as infections or psychological disorders. In general, see your doctor if you have persistent or excessive fatigue.

## Causes

The cause of chronic fatigue syndrome is still unknown. Some people may be born with a predisposition for the disorder, which is then triggered by a combination of factors. Potential triggers include:

- **Viral infections.** Because some people develop chronic fatigue syndrome after having a viral infection, researchers question whether some viruses might trigger the disorder. Suspicious viruses include the Epstein-Barr virus, human herpes virus 6. No conclusive link has yet been found.
- **Immune system problems.** The immune systems of people who have chronic fatigue syndrome appear to be impaired slightly, but it's unclear if this impairment is enough to actually cause the disorder.
- **Hormonal imbalances.** People who have chronic fatigue syndrome also sometimes experience abnormal blood levels of hormones produced in the hypothalamus, pituitary glands or adrenal glands. But the significance of these abnormalities is still unknown.
- **Physical or emotional trauma.** Some people report that they experienced an injury, surgery or significant emotional stress shortly before their symptoms began.

## Risk factors

Factors that may increase your risk of chronic fatigue syndrome include:

- **Age.** Chronic fatigue syndrome can occur at any age, but it most commonly affects young to middle-aged adults.
- **Gender.** Women are diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome much more often than men, but it may be that women are simply more likely to report their symptoms to a doctor.

## Complications

Possible complications of chronic fatigue syndrome include:

- Lifestyle restrictions
- Increased work absences
- Social isolation
- Depression



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