

Obesity and weight loss

Obesity is a world-wide epidemic. It increases the risk of Hypertension (high blood pressure), Diabetes and High Cholesterol levels. These diseases constitute some of the major risk factors for cardiovascular disease, hence the prevention of Obesity will greatly prevent cardiovascular disease.

Women should have an abdominal circumference of less than 84cm and men less than 90cm. The body-mass-index (BMI) should be between 20 and 24. The BMI is calculated easily: $\text{weight (kg)} / \text{height (m)}^2$

Exercise and Diet are the cornerstones of a healthy weight management. It is recommended that people should exercise in moderation for 30 – 45 minutes 5x per week. Brisk walking, cycling, or jogging are adequate types of exercise.

The only two diets ever to have shown a benefit in preventing cardiac disease are the DASH Diet and a Mediterranean Diet. In general, a healthy diet should incorporate protein, fruit, and vegetables, but limit carbohydrates and avoid sugar and animal fats.

Banting implies a high protein and sometimes high fat diet (Noakes). This is strongly discouraged by the Cardiology community, as this will increase patients' LDL levels and therefor risk of cardiovascular disease.

Alcohol use

Alcohol use in the form of red wine in moderation has beneficial effects on your cholesterol profile. However, excessive alcohol use is directly toxic to the heart and is associated with weight gain, an increased risk for developing arrhythmias such as AF, and developing poorly controlled blood pressure. The following “Healthy alcohol use guidelines” are recommend:

- Less than 14 units of alcohol per week (One unit constituting 150ml glass of wine), spread over more than 3 days, and never using more than 4 units per day.

If you feel that you are using excessive alcohol, we recommend that you speak to a health care provider. Alcohol use is addictive, and early identification of an alcohol use disorder is important.

Vaping

Vaping is often seen as a less toxic form of smoking by many users. Unfortunately, many who may never have taken up smoking, now 'vape'. No long-term data on the health effects of vaping is available; however, the available literature associates vaping with the risk of adverse health effects. Cardiovascular disease experts and lung specialist agree agrees that we cannot endorse the using of e-cigarettes or vaping.

Smoking cessation

Smoking cessation is the single best investment that any smoker can make. Smoking increases your chances of cardiovascular disease by more than 7-fold. Smoking cessation can be challenging. Discuss the various options with your cardiologist or GP. The route to smoking cessation starts with your willingness to quit.

Vitamins and supplements?

Trials have been done with vitamins and supplements such as Magnesium, Omega 3/6 etc. These trials have compared them to placebo (dummy tablets) and have shown no benefit for prevention of cardiovascular disease.

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