

The South Asian Heart

About one-third of U.S. teens would flunk a treadmill fitness test

A recent study by the Northwestern University showed that 34 percent of girls and boys ages 12 to 19 showed a poor level of cardiovascular fitness on an 8-minute treadmill test. The study included 2,205 adolescents and 3,110 adults ages 20 to 49 who participated in the 1999-2002 surveys.

The 8-minute treadmill test consisted of making a person walk on a treadmill (see page 268 in **our book "How to Beat the Heart Disease Epidemic among South Asians"**) while his or her EKG, heart rate, and blood pressure are monitored. The **walking** became faster and steeper after a 2-minute warm-up, and a rapidly increasing heart rate after just a short period of exercising defined poor fitness. How long a person can exercise before developing chest pain and the severity of chest pain are major determinants of both **quality and length** of life. Teens and adults with poor fitness were two to four times more likely to be overweight or obese than those considered moderately or highly fit, the study found. Waist sizes, cholesterol levels and blood pressure levels were also higher in those in the low fitness category.

This study raises **important concerns** because teenagers are often considered to be in the prime of their fitness. Food and physical activity habits picked up during the teen age years may often carry on to their adult lives. Unfit teenagers may grow up to be unfit adults with markedly reduced life spans and quality of lives.

How to use this information:

If you have teenagers at home, make sure that they participate in physical activities and games (non-video). Encourage healthy eating. Any health issues such as high blood pressure or obesity should be tackled immediately. Plan family walks and hikes in nearby malls, parks or hiking trails. Make sure that the time spend playing video games and watching TV is no more than 1-2 hours/day.

Reference: Prevalence and Cardiovascular Disease Correlates of Low Cardiorespiratory Fitness in Adolescents and Adults Mercedes R. Carnethon, PhD; et al. JAMA. 2005;294:2981-2988.

Erectile Dysfunction: A Warning Sign for Heart Disease

More than 9000 men aged 55 years or older were evaluated every 3 months for cardiovascular disease and erectile dysfunction between 1994 and 2003. More than 8000 (85%) had no heart disease at the beginning of this study. Nearly 47% of these men had erectile dysfunction at that time. For the men who did not have erectile dysfunction at the start of study, 57 % of them reported erectile dysfunction after 5 years.

The study found that men with erectile dysfunction were more likely than other men to experience chest pain, a heart attack or a stroke during the next seven years. The researchers found erectile dysfunction to be almost as good a predictor for cardiovascular disease as smoking or a family history of heart attack.

While this connection was known before, this is the first study that looked at such a large group of healthy men for a correlation. (See pg 83, Emerging Risk Markers in **our book "How to Beat the Heart Disease Epidemic among South Asians"**)

How to use this information:

Men who are having problems achieving or maintaining an erection or taking drugs to treat their impotence should talk to their physicians to be screened for heart disease. Damage to their penile blood vessels may suggest similar damage to their coronary arteries.

Reference: Erectile Dysfunction and Subsequent Cardiovascular Disease Ian M. Thompson, MD et al. JAMA. 2005;294:2996-3002.

Nutrition and Exercise tips for the Road Warrior

Do you travel often on business? Do you feel exhausted during your trip? Do you go without food for long periods of time and end up over-eating? We want to share some of tips for keeping fit and healthy during your trips. Both of us travel nearly 50 % of the time

(untill recently, Sudesh's travels included South Africa, India and Europe!). These tips will help you feel energized and have fun on your trips.

Healthy Eating on the Go!

We often start with a healthy breakfast: Oatmeal with fruits or nuts along with a glass of milk, No-cholesterol eggs (Egg Beaters) with toast and bowl of fruit are all good examples of healthy breakfast. We recommend that you eat small meals throughout the day. Pack your bags with healthy snacks such as low fat yogurt or energy bars. We will discuss selecting energy bars in a future newsletter – make sure that the energy bars are not packed with sugar or calories. Sudesh often chooses to be vegetarian – both of us like the Burger King Veggie Burger. You can have one or two burgers along with salad. You can discard the buns if you like. Dinner can be a combination of a soup with a salad. Make sure that you choose a salad with a variety of vegetables. If you must have a dessert – choose a fruit salad with sherbet. Drink plenty of water.

We recommend that you purchase a pill box that has clearly marked compartments for morning, noon, evening and bed-time medications. Fill the medications for the entire week. This box will help you remember to take your medicines regularly and alert if you have missed a dose. These boxes cost \$5-\$10 in your local pharmacy. If your trip is long, ask your physician for a spare prescription.

Physical Activity on the Go!

We often choose hotels that have good fitness rooms. We often pack a set of exercise clothes and comfortable walking shoes in our "travel suitcase". Except for the winter, Sudesh prefers running or walking outdoors, while I prefer the indoor treadmill. It is always better to exercise the first thing in the morning. I often give my presentations in the evening; sometimes I make time in the afternoon for a short walk. Stretching exercises or yoga in your room as you watch TV before you go to bed is an excellent way to relax your way to a good sleep. Sudesh has often played a round of miniature golf or gone for a walk with his clients before dinner. In addition to refreshing himself, this helps him to know his clients better.

Frequently Asked Questions.....

Q: I love your book "How to Beat the Heart Disease among South Asians". However, it is a very detailed book. Do I have to read every chapter to benefit from the book?

A: This book is intended as a reference book for you and your doctor. Heart disease is a very complex disease and we wanted to cover all the key features of the disease. Clearly, some of the sections may not be applicable to you. We suggest that you work with your doctor and study the sections most relevant to you. We also have included "Key Points in a Nutshell" to assist readers to understand the most important **concepts** from each section.

Q: I notice very little information on stress-reduction techniques. Isn't work stress a very important risk factor for heart disease?

A: The variety of stress we face in our day-to-day lives is universal and cannot be eliminated. If you have suffered a heart-attack, there is no need for you to quit your job unless you get very little job satisfaction. Those who have control over their work and derive satisfaction from hard work (12 to 16 hours/ day) have no higher risk of heart disease. **However, anger, hostility, and depression have serious cardiovascular consequences and are covered in our book.** We encourage you to eat nutritious food and exercise regularly. Meditation and yoga are beneficial in combination with a healthy lifestyle.

About South Asian Heart

The South Asian Heart is published monthly, by CADI Research Foundation. It is filled with the latest "news you can use" on heart disease prevention and management and is designed particularly for people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. We appreciate your comments, questions and suggestions. Send your email to sudesh@cadiresearch.com.

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Book Discount :

« How to Beat the Heart Disease Epidemic among South Asians : A Prevention and Management Guide for Asian Indians and their Doctors» is available at a discounted price at www.amazon.com/shops/advanceh till Jan 31st 2006. Please order your copy today before the discount expires.

A portion of the book proceeds goes to support CADI Research Foundation