

Why Excessive Overtime Work May Be Harming Your Heart

Do you regularly work overtime? If so, you might be at increased risk for a heart attack or heart disease. A new 11-year study of more than 6,000 British workers found that regularly working 10- or 11-hour days increases the risk of heart disease by 60%. This association held even after taking into account 21 known risk factors for heart disease, such as smoking, being overweight, and having high cholesterol.

While the study was conducted on British workers, the study authors pointed out that the United States is one of the countries that is well above average when it comes to overtime hours. They also emphasized that overtime work has increased in recent years.

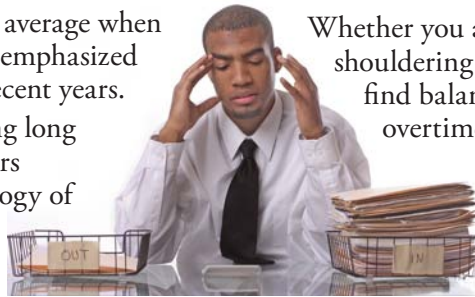
The study did not explain why working long hours increased the risk, but researchers theorized that the lifestyles or psychology of people who work long hours could be contributing factors. The study did find that overtime workers

tended to exhibit Type A behavior patterns, a willingness to work while sick, higher levels of depression, and an inability to diffuse work-related stress. However, they were unable to say whether these problems were caused by excessive overtime work or whether these behaviors contributed to the willingness to work overtime.

One thing researchers found for certain was this: Having a say about working extra hours is easier on your body than being told you have to. In the study, those who chose to work overtime were less likely to experience chest pain.

Whether you are a company owner or an employee shouldering a lot of responsibilities, it's important to find balance in your life. For a healthier heart, limit overtime. Stay home when you are sick. Rest when you are tired. And instead of burning the candle at both ends, make time to exercise regularly and to relax daily.

European Heart Journal. June 2010.



Pay Attention to Your Blood Pressure

One out of every 3 adults in the United States has elevated blood pressure (hypertension), yet many of them don't know it. A

recent report reveals that high blood pressure is responsible for 1 out of every 6 deaths in the United States. It is the greatest single risk factor for deaths from cardiovascular disease. Deaths from high blood pressure have increased in the United States by 25% in the last 10 years.

One important way to keep blood pressure in check is to eat less sodium (salt) and more potassium. Experts estimate that about 17% of all hypertension could be prevented if everyone had adequate potassium in their diet. New recommendations are to eat 4,700 mg of potassium daily. Fresh fruits and vegetables contain high amounts of potassium.

You can also use sodium/potassium salt (called Lite Salt™) in place of regular salt – but use it moderately. (If you have heart or kidney problems, talk with your doctor before using Lite Salt.)

Other recommendations to prevent hypertension include:

- **Lose any excess weight.** Start with a goal of losing 10% of your body weight, if needed.
- **Get regular moderate physical activity** – at least 30 minutes most days of the week.

How Much Sodium?

More than 8 in 10 Americans (87%) eat more salt than is recommended. The Institute of Medicine recommends that adults consume less than 2,300 mg of sodium daily. If you are age 50 or older, African American, or have elevated blood pressure, you should be eating less than 1,500 mg of sodium daily.

Learn more about the DASH Diet, prepared by the National Institutes of Health:

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf

- **Eat more fruits and vegetables.** Eight to ten servings per day are recommended for lowering or preventing high blood pressure.
- **Eat more whole grains.** Aim for at least 3 servings of whole grains daily.
- **Limit alcohol intake,** if used at all.
- **Get your blood pressure checked regularly** – less than 120/80 is recommended for good health. A pressure of 140/90 or higher indicates high blood pressure, and a 2-3 times increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

If your blood pressure is high, follow your doctor's guidance on medications and lifestyle changes.

Institute of Medicine. 2010.



Eat Nuts for Heart Health

Consuming more nuts is the key to a heart-healthy diet. Researchers combined the data from

25 studies to evaluate the effect of nuts on the risk of heart disease. They found that study participants who ate 2 ounces of nuts a day had a drop in their total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and triglycerides. HDL cholesterol (the good kind) increased slightly.

Those who ate nuts 4 times a week lowered the risk of heart disease by 37%!



The more nuts the study participants ate, the greater their reduction in cholesterol level and coronary risk – regardless of the type of nut.

Nuts are a nutrient-dense food:

- Rich in plant proteins
- Rich in unsaturated, healthy fats
- Rich in dietary fiber and antioxidants
- High in minerals that are good for the heart (copper, magnesium, and potassium)
- High in vitamins that are good for the heart (folic acid, niacin, vitamin E, and vitamin B6)

One Ounce of Nuts Is...

- 48 pistachios
- 24 almonds
- 18 medium cashews
- 14 walnut halves
- 15 pecan halves
- 12 hazelnuts (filberts)
- 8 medium Brazil nuts



Research shows that frequent eating of nuts does not lead to weight gain. Just be sure to eat them in place of other high-calorie foods. Grab a handful of nuts for a healthy snack, use them in baking, and sprinkle them on fruit salad.

Archives of Internal Medicine. 2010.

Soybeans and Breast Cancer Risk

Soybeans are rich in *isoflavones*, a group of phytoestrogens that have been suggested to protect against breast cancer. While there are also concerns that soy might increase the risk of breast cancer, a new large study in China gives good evidence that soy might actually decrease the risk of breast cancer.

The Shanghai Breast Cancer Survival Study included 5,033 women who had breast cancer surgery. The study followed these women and looked at lifestyle factors – especially at how much soy they ate. During the first 4 years, there were 444 deaths and 534 cancer recurrences. Breast cancer recurrence or death dropped by nearly one-third for women who ate the most soy (top 25%) compared to those who ate the least.

An interesting finding in this study was that the more soy that was eaten (up to 11 grams of protein daily), the greater the benefit. However, soy intake above 11 grams had little or no additional benefit.



Foods that supply at least 11 grams of soy protein include:

- 1½ cups soymilk
- ½ cup cooked soybeans
- ½ cup tofu (¼ block)
- ½ cup soy miso
- ½ cup tempeh
- 1 ounce dry roasted soy nuts

Another finding: Women who had the highest level of soy intake (11+ grams of soy protein a day) and who did not use the drug tamoxifen had a lower risk of mortality and breast cancer recurrence than did women who had the lowest soy intake and *did* use tamoxifen. See your doctor before making changes to your diet.

The researchers concluded by saying, “Among women with breast cancer, soy food consumption was significantly associated with decreased risk of death and recurrence.”

Journal of the American Medical Association. 2009.

Dining Out Without Pigging Out

“Compared to some of the foods we’re seeing in restaurants now, the Big Mac® seems downright dainty,” says Michael Jacobson, of the Center for Science in the Public Interest. Super-duper-sized restaurant portions are here to stay. But you’re not obliged to eat every bite. Learn how to navigate your way around fatty, calorie-laden menu items and still have fun dining out.

www.wellsource.info/wn/Healthy-Dining-Out.pdf



ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

Q: I’ve heard that eating more potassium-rich foods can help control blood pressure. What foods contain potassium?

A: Go to www.wellsource.info/wn/ask-potassium.pdf to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: paulaw@wellsource.com, subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.

Health Challenge: “Work All Your Muscles with Cross-Training” available at: www.wellsource.info/wn/hc-crosstraining.pdf.

Cross-training helps lower the risk of overuse injuries, reduce boredom in your workout routine, and increase your total body fitness. Participate in a variety of physical activities that will work all of your body’s muscle groups.