

De-stress your heart!



Can stress lead you to have a heart attack?? According to **Shelton Kartun**, a specialist in the field of anger management and a counsellor in stress management as well as Founder of the only Anger & Stress Management Centre in South Africa, the answer is an emphatic **YES**. High stress has been directly linked to the occurrence of heart disease and often fatal heart attacks.

Statistics from around the world show that:

- **1 in 7 males** develop heart disease as a result of high stress and
- **2 out of 5 adults** have high blood pressure due to stress!

These shocking statistics gives us all enough reason to de-stress our lives for our hearts sake...

The effect of chronic stress on your mind, body, and heart are equally as detrimental as **high blood pressure** and **high cholesterol**. Chronic stress increases blood pressure and cholesterol and leads to chronic hypertension.

How your body responds to stress:

When you experience stress, your body goes through a series of physiological responses that feed into your nervous system and circulatory system and affect everything from hormones to heart rate. The "fight-or-flight" response of the body during times of stress is well-documented. This **natural response** floods your body with adrenaline and cortisol, which increases heart rate, redirects blood flow to the muscular system, releases fats into the bloodstream for use as energy, increases breathing rate, tenses muscles, and increases your blood's clotting ability—all of which are intended to help you fight off or run from an opponent. The only problem is, most often the cause of stress is not a life threatening situation but a long day at the office.

Your body doesn't know the difference, so it reacts to all stress in the same way. Over time, this can wreak havoc on your health physically, mentally, and emotionally.

How your heart is affected by stress:

Stress affects your cardiovascular system in the following ways -

- ♥ Heart rate increases
- ♥ The rate of blood flow speeds up, **increasing blood pressure**
- ♥ The release of fatty acids into the bloodstream for energy **increases cholesterol** and triglyceride levels
- ♥ Under chronic stress, the continued release of cortisol seems to have some effect on where fat is deposited in the body, most often in the abdomen area

The bottom line: Chronic stress negatively affects your health.

The solution: Find healthy ways to manage stress, because we all know that stress isn't going away anytime soon but it is manageable.

Tips for managing stress:

- Effective time management, planning and organisation
- Relax – have breaks during the day, especially at work
- Accept your circumstances and do not compare yourself to another individual – you are unique
- Exercise - the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA recommends that an adult exercise at least 5 times a week for 30 minutes
- Reduce excess weight – follow a healthy well balanced eating plan
- Drink lots of water
- Develop a positive outlook – confess positive affirmations
- Set boundaries in your life
- Develop routine and structure
- Sleep for at least 6 hours
- Avoid addictions i.e. TV, drug, alcohol, etc.
- Try aromatherapy or massages
- Have realistic goals
- Don't be a people pleaser – learn to say NO
- Recognise what you can change – don't waste time with the "if only's", the past is the past
- Have a great support network (friends)

The more you can do to find healthy ways of managing stress today, the better your life and heart will be.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA cares about the wellbeing of every South African. If you have a problem with anger and stress management, we implore you to take care of your heart and seek professional assistance if you struggle to manage severe stress. Contact **Shelton Kartun** on info@anger.co.za or 021 556 3679 to assist or call our Heart Mark Diet Line on 0860 223 222 for free nutritional advice. To learn more about anger and stress management, consult www.anger.co.za

De-stress your heart today...it's the only one you have!

News Release



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For **free nutritional advice**, contact the HSFSA's Registered Dieticians on the **Heart Mark Diet Line** on **0860 223 222** or www.heartfoundation.co.za

The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa is a community-based organisation established to reduce the incidence of heart disease and stroke in the population of South Africa by providing education and supporting research. For further information visit www.heartfoundation.co.za