

Lifestyle Changes and the Impact on Cardiovascular Risks

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Received: November 25, 2022

Published: December 01, 2022

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Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death by disease in the world. However, they can be prevented, according to WHO, 80% of deaths from heart disease could be avoided with lifestyle changes. The cardiovascular factors that depend on lifestyle or modifiable risk factors are sedentarism, smoking, alcoholism, obesity, hypertension, stress, dyslipidemias, and diabetes. By changing these factors, we will be promoting more health and less morbidity and mortality.

In this scenario, acute myocardial infarction, stroke, sudden death, and peripheral arterial disease are the main causes of cardiovascular death. This incidence and death can be improved if there is an action to control risk factors, such as hypertension, diabetes, dyslipidemias, campaigns to raise awareness of the risk of tobacco and to encourage regular physical activity. Simple preventive measures have a direct impact by reducing cardiovascular mortality rates, smoking cessation, regular exercise, healthy eating, weight control, control of blood pressure levels, cholesterol and diabetes, good sleep and stress control are proven to be beneficial to individuals.

The Mediterranean diet is associated with lower incidence of heart disease and high longevity rates in countries such as Italy and Greece. The menu is based on the consumption of fish, grains, fresh vegetables and fruits, and olive oil. Huge benefits are obtained by ceasing the use of cigarettes and alcohol, reducing sodium intake, controlling weight, and cutting out foods that promote diseases such as hypertension and diabetes. Smoking has a direct action on the blood vessels leading to inflammation and atherosclerotic disease. It is the most difficult habit to quit because

of psychological and chemical dependence. Some individuals need a personalized, pharmacological treatment. Alcohol, on the other hand, has cardiotoxic effects that cause changes in heart cells.

Other factors are associated with behavioral aspects. Chronic stress, for example, increases the level of hormones such as adrenaline, noradrenaline, and cortisol in the bloodstream. These substances raise the heart rate and blood pressure, which can damage the heart. Exercise, in turn, helps control the heart rate, making the heart work less and more efficiently, active people have greater physical capacity and live longer than sedentary people, with a better quality of life, regardless of whether they have a cardiovascular disease. The ideal is that the exercise be pleasurable, it cannot be a sacrifice. Find out what you like: when it comes time to choose, give preference to activities that motivate you, that make you feel good during the workout; exercise in the period of the day that you are most willing, the important thing keep moving.

To conclude this editorial, we know that besides the genetic component, the individual's lifestyle is a preponderant factor in the appearance and maintenance of cardiovascular diseases. A diet predominantly composed of fats and carbohydrates, sedentary habits, smoking, alcohol abuse, and the stress of the modern world are harmful not only to the overall cardiovascular health of man, but are also risk factors for the appearance of some types of cancers, some of them very prevalent. Changing lifestyle, therefore, has been presented as a favorable non-pharmacological intervention in the fight against cardiovascular diseases and the emergence of neoplasms. Understanding the need for this change and building a healthy lifestyle will promote quality of life, longevity, and many other benefits.