

[IMAGE]

Make Every Month Heart Health Month

By Editorial Staff

February is American Heart Month, but heart health is really a global issue; after all, we've all got hearts and these days, we all do things that put our health in peril, in the form of heart disease, stroke, heart attacks and other life-threatening conditions. Your heart deserves to be treated well every month of the year, but let's get started during this time of awareness by highlighting the latest research on how men and women can maximize heart health and reduce their risk of heart problems.

Heart Health for Women: Avoid Diet Drinks: Drinking two or more artificially sweetened beverages a day is associated with an increased risk of heart attack, clot-based death and early death in women over the age of 50. Published in *Stroke*, the study found that women who drank more than one diet drink daily had the following increased risks compared to women who drank one or fewer artificially sweetened drinks.:

- 23 percent more likely to suffer any type of stroke
- 31 percent more likely to suffer a stroke due to an artery block
- 29 percent more likely to suffer a heart attack
- 16 percent more likely to die from any cause

Of particular concern: Even women in the study with *no history* of heart disease or diabetes had more than double the risk of a clot-based stroke if they drank two or more artificially sweetened beverages a day.

heart health - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *Heart Health for Men: Power of the Push-Up:* Is the number of push-ups a man can perform in one minute a predictor of heart disease risk? Yes, according to new research in *JAMA Network Open*. Men who can do at least 40 push-ups within a minute's time are 96 percent less likely to develop heart disease compared to men who perform less than 10 push-ups in the same time.

Findings are based on a 10-year evaluation of more than 1,000 male firefighters (average age: 40 years) that included timed push-up tests and evaluation of V02 max (maximum oxygen consumption during intense exercise), body-mass index (BMI), blood pressure and other variables at baseline. During the decade-long study period, initial push-up capacity proved to be the strongest predictor of heart disease among the

variables assessed.

What You Can Do

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the world, pure and simple, and in many cases, it's avoidable with proper diet, consistent physical activity and other lifestyle choices such as stress reduction, avoiding smoking, etc. While the above studies examined specific age groups, it's reasonable to assume that limiting your artificial sweetener consumption and maximizing your fitness (whether or not you can actually do a full 40 push-ups in one minute) are smart choices when it comes to heart health – regardless of age or gender. Talk to your doctor for more information.

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