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.

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.

- **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)

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.”


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.

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

Soybeans and Breast Cancer Risk

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

Most people wouldn’t think of eating two orders of fried steak and eggs for breakfast. But if you order a stack of cream-stuffed hotcakes you’re getting about the same number of calories – almost 1,400. The average adult should eat about 2,000 calories per day, and eat no more than 20 grams daily of saturated fat.

“Compared to some of the foods we’re seeing in restaurants now, the Big Mac® seems downright dainty,” says Michael Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a nutrition and food safety consumer group.

According to the National Restaurant Association, Americans (ages 8 years and older) eat at restaurants more than 4.2 times per week. And 78% of American adults say social occasions are likely to occur more often at a food establishment than at home. Eating out can be a challenge to weight management, but it doesn’t have to be. Here are some tips for eating away from home:

✔️ Plan ahead. Many restaurants now offer online access to their menus and nutrition information. Or call them and ask specific questions about possible healthy, low-fat menu options.

✔️ Choose restaurants that offer low-saturated fat, lower calorie menu options, including salads, soups, stir-fry, or broiled fish.

✔️ Look for health-friendly terms on a menu: light, steamed, baked, broiled, garden fresh, in season, heart-healthy. Words that indicate an unhealthy menu item include: fried, deep-fried, cheese, creamed, or in cream. Avoid these!

✔️ Start with a healthy soup or salad (limit dressing – order it on the side or use lemon juice instead). Soup or salad helps fill you up.

✔️ Keep portion sizes small. Order from the senior or children’s menu to receive smaller portions. Place half of your meal in a take-out bag before you eat, or share part of your meal with a friend.

✔️ Substitute healthier foods when possible. Request olive oil in place of butter and brown rice in place of white rice. Ask for whole-grain breads and multigrain pancakes, served with the butter on the side. Request skim- or low-fat milk in place of whole milk. Some fast-food restaurants now offer low-calorie options, such as dinner salads and vegetarian burgers.

✔️ Order an item from the menu instead of heading for the “all-you-can-eat” buffet.

✔️ Trim all visible fat off meat. Request that fatty sauces and cheeses be left off an entrée or sandwich.

✔️ Don’t drink your calories. Soft drinks, sugar-sweetened juices, and alcoholic beverages add calories to your meal. Eliminate hundreds of extra calories just by choosing water or a calorie-free beverage when you dine out!

Center for Science in the Public Interest. 2010.
I’ve heard that eating more potassium-rich foods can help control blood pressure. What foods contain potassium?

New recommendations from the Institute of Medicine suggest eating 4,700 mg of potassium daily. But the average American eats less than half of that. Athletes might need more to replace the potassium used by their muscles or lost through sweat during prolonged exercise.

Low potassium is called hypokalemia. It can cause muscle cramping, slow reflexes, slow digestion, and if severely low, cardiovascular irregularities. According to the National Institutes of Health, possible causes of hypokalemia include diuretics, diarrhea, eating disorders, and consuming large amounts of licorice.

Eating foods high in potassium can help you prevent these symptoms and may help bring down your blood pressure. One cup of orange juice or a banana can replace the potassium lost during 1-2 hours of hard exercise. Sport drinks are poor sources of potassium.

Aim for 4,700 milligrams of potassium each day. You can quickly see why you need to eat 8-10 servings of fruits and vegetables daily to reach this goal.

### Fruits and vegetables that are good sources of potassium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving Size</th>
<th>Potassium (mg)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple, fresh</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apricots, fresh</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artichokes, cooked</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asparagus</td>
<td>8 spears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avocado</td>
<td>½ medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>1 large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans, cooked</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels sprouts, cooked</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantaloupe, diced</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots, cooked slices</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celery</td>
<td>1 stalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese cabbage, cooked</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granola</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens (beet, collards, etc.), cooked</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honeydew, diced</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiwi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mango</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oatmeal, cooked</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orange, cooked</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Fruits and vegetables that are good sources of potassium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving Size</th>
<th>Potassium (mg)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orange juice</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papayas</td>
<td>1 medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantains, cooked</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potatoes, baked</td>
<td>1 medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prunes</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raisins, mini-snack</td>
<td>½-ounce box</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soybeans, cooked</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinach, cooked</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunflower seeds</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet potato</td>
<td>1 medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato</td>
<td>1 medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter squash, cooked</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
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</table>

### Other foods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving Size</th>
<th>Potassium (mg)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicken breast</td>
<td>3 ounces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salmon</td>
<td>3 ounces</td>
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Sources: Institute of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, American Heart Association, USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference 22, Colorado State University Extension.
Work All Your Muscles with Cross-Training

Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™
1. Keep a written record of the type of exercises you do each day and the number of minutes you spend doing them.
3. To complete the Challenge, do at least 3 types of physical activities each week, with a total of 22 exercise days this month.
4. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

The Benefits of Cross-Training
There are many muscles in your body – more than 600 of them! Some of your muscles help move food through your digestive system and pump blood through your body. Skeletal muscles help you walk, jump, carry heavy boxes, and do sit-ups. They’re the ones that you can strengthen with exercise.

But no single exercise or series of activities can stretch and strengthen them all. That’s why cross-training is important.

With cross-training, you add new activities to your regular physical activity by:

- **Combining multiple activities into the same workout.** For example, you could begin your workout with a short bike ride, followed by stair climbing, and finish with 15 minutes of walking.
- **Doing different activities on alternating days.** For example, if you normally run, plan to swim, bike, ski, or skate once or twice a week instead.

Having a regular cross-training regimen will keep all of your muscles toned and strong, not just those used in your major activity. Think of it as an ongoing body tune-up. If you do the same exercise every day, you continually exercise the same muscles – which might cause strain and injury to the overworked muscles. Cross-training actually reduces the risk of injury.

Variety: The Spice of (a Physically Fit) Life
If you don’t exercise at all, starting with a little bit of a lot of activities can be an easy and fun way to begin a lifelong fitness habit. Walk one day; bicycle the next. Play basketball or tennis on another day during the week. Take your time and add activities slowly. Over a period of time, build up to 30 minutes or more of moderate and varied activity each day. When you increase the number of activities and time spent, you increase your health benefits.

No matter how fit you are, there’s a break-even point for your body. For example, training intensively can cause knee or leg problems for runners; swimmers can experience shoulder problems. Cross-training allows even the most ardent runner or swimmer to be more active. Adding a rigorous cycling session or two each week will increase cardiovascular fitness but keep muscles from getting overworked.

Physical activity of any kind is good for you. Cross-training can help you maintain your conditioning even when injured. A sore foot may keep you from running but not from swimming. A sore shoulder can limit your swimming but still allow you to walk briskly.

An important and often overlooked benefit of cross-training is its ability to motivate. Many fitness experts agree: Pursuing a variety of activities can keep you from getting bored with your exercise program. When you find your exercise program interesting and enjoyable, you’re more likely to keep at it.

If maintaining a healthy weight is one of your goals, remember that all continuous activities burn fat and calories. You can often exercise longer and therefore burn more calories by doing a variety of physical activities.
Types of Cross-Training Activities
Different activities provide different benefits for your body. Here is just a small sample:

- **Aerobic Fitness** – brisk walking, jogging, swimming, biking, cross-country skiing, rowing, inline skating, stair-stepping, aerobic dance, and ice skating. You strengthen your entire cardiovascular system.

- **Anaerobic Fitness** – short periods of high intensity exercises (e.g., walking fast, climbing stairs even faster). High-intensity activities can be beneficial, especially if you’re playing in competitive sports (and you have no health problems).

- **Muscle Strengthening** – lifting free weights or using weight machines. Strong muscles help you maintain and improve balance, posture, and daily activities.

- **Muscle Endurance** – high repetition of push-ups, curl-ups, pull-ups, or other calisthenics. Endurance helps you keep doing an activity longer and recover from fatigue sooner.

- **Flexibility** – stretching or yoga. Flexibility and mobility will gradually decrease without regular stretching.

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Cross-Training Tips

**Be Active Daily**
Be sure to get at least 30 minutes of activity that makes you breathe hard on at least 5 days each week – more is better. Aerobic activity helps build your stamina or “staying power.” How hard do you need to push yourself? If you can talk without any trouble at all, you are not working hard enough. If you can’t talk at all, it’s too hard.

**Lift Weights**
Strengthening exercises build muscles. Lifting weights or using weight machines is one of the best ways to improve your strength as you get older. When you retain your muscle strength, you can get up from a chair by yourself, lift your grandchildren, and walk through the park. Use weights 2-3 days each week.

**Flex and Balance**
Stretching can improve your flexibility. Moving more freely will make it easier for you to reach down to tie your shoes or look over your shoulder when you back the car out of your driveway. Also, do things to help your balance. Try standing on one foot, then the other. If you can, don’t hold on to anything for support. At least 2 days a week, do exercises that increase your flexibility and balance.

**Go the Distance, Once in a While**
To build endurance and health, choose one day a week to exercise for a longer period of time than usual. If you typically bike 30 minutes daily, for example, go for an hour-long ride – even longer if you want to!

**Ease Into It**
Even if you are already active, ease into a new activity. Just because you swim regularly doesn’t mean you’re ready to put on a 40-pound pack and hike steep mountain trails. Rather than add on another activity to an already strenuous exercise schedule, replace a workout or two each week with your new activity. Whatever cross-training sport you choose – whether climbing stairs, playing tennis, or cycling – limit yourself to 20 minutes or so until your muscles become accustomed to it. Once you are in shape for the new workout, you can increase the duration.

Take the time to find activities you like, try them, and continue to participate in a variety of activities from now on.

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**Ready, get set, cross-train!**
**Instructions**

1. Post the Health Challenge Calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Use this calendar to record your exercise program (minutes/day as well as type of exercise), weekly weight, and any other items you may want to track.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you were physically active. To meet this challenge, you must do at least 3 types of physical activities each week and accumulate a total of 22 exercise days this month. Then keep up this health practice for a lifetime of best health!

**CHALLENGE**

Do 3 types of physical activity each week.

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<th>MONDAY</th>
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______ Number of days this month I stretched
______ Number of days this month I did strengthening exercises
______ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of aerobic physical activity

**Other wellness projects completed this month:**

_________________________________________________________________________________

Signature ___________________________ Date __________________________

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