



Successful Aging
Institute

November E-NewsLetter

Successful Aging Institute November Classes:

Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere-Chinese Proverb

Contact SAI at 541.463.6262 or lanecc.edu/sai for registration costs, locations and other information:

Become a Senior Companion: 11/05/15(10:00-11:30)

Beginning Yoga: 11/03-12/01 (12:15-1:30)

Chair Yoga: 11/02-12/07 (1:30-2:30)

Get a Job at 50+: 11/05/15 (5:30-7:30)

Getting Paid for Giving Care: 11/17/15 (10:00- 11:30)

Living History Series: 11/02-11/12 (11:00-12:00)

Living Well Workshop: either 11/04-12/16 (2:00-4:30) or 11/10-12/15 (12:30-3:00)

Tailgate Like You Mean It: 11/21-12/05 (12:00-3:00)

Yoga for the Immune System: 11/02-12/07 (1:30-2:30)

Ongoing: AARP Driver Safety Program. Visit lanecc.edu/sai/course-descriptions for dates, times and locations.

10 Surprising Heart Attack Triggers

By Jodi Helmer

1. Asthma that requires daily medication

Persistent **asthma**, which is asthma severe enough to require daily controller medications, is associated with a 60 percent higher risk of a heart attack, **stroke** or

death from cardiovascular disease, according to new research published in the journal *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology*.

"Both asthma and cardiovascular disease are caused by high levels of inflammation," explains lead researcher Matthew Tattersall, assistant professor of medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

In addition, because chest tightness is often a symptom of asthma, asthmatics could miss the signs of a heart attack, delaying treatment. To reduce the long-term cardiovascular risk, Tattersall believes close monitoring is essential. "If you have persistent asthma, you may need stronger and more aggressive preventative care," he says.

2. Taking certain heartburn drugs

For those with **acid reflux**, taking **proton pump inhibitors (PPIs)** — including Prilosec, Nexium and Prevacid — was associated with a 16 to 21 percent higher heart attack risk, according to a large new Stanford University study that looked at data from nearly 3 million patients.

The study found no link, however, between heart attacks and another well-known type of heartburn drug, H2 blockers, such as Tagamet, Pepcid and Zantac.

So why are PPIs different? Previous research suggests that they may reduce the production of nitric oxide, an important molecule that helps maintain the health of the inner linings of blood vessels. Too little nitric oxide could accelerate heart disease.

While the increase in risk is modest, researchers said, those with heart problems who are taking PPIs should talk to their doctors.

3. Having migraines with aura

Middle-aged and older women who have migraines with aura, meaning the headaches are often preceded by visual symptoms like flashing lights or blind spots, have an increased risk of heart attack, according to a 2013 analysis of 28,000 women enrolled in the ongoing national Women's Health Study.

In fact, having migraine with aura was found to be the second-strongest contributor to heart attack and stroke risk after high blood pressure, according to researcher Tobias Kurth, M.D., of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and the French National Institute of Health.

This does not mean everyone with this type of migraine will have a heart attack or stroke, Kurth noted, but that these migraine sufferers should try to reduce their risk in other ways, including not smoking, staying active and keeping blood pressure under control.

4. Skipping the flu vaccine

A flu vaccine doesn't just protect you against that nasty virus. Recent research has shown it also helps your heart, decreasing your odds of having a heart attack by 50 percent in the year following the shot compared with those who don't get the vaccine. Now a study published in the journal *Vaccine* shows why.

"We discovered that antibodies that are produced after the vaccination activate molecular processes, which protect and strengthen the cardiovascular system," explains study coauthor Veljko Veljkovic of the Vinca Institute of Nuclear Sciences at the University of Belgrade in Serbia.

By getting the flu vaccine, Veljkovic says, you're getting a double benefit: protection against both the flu and a heart attack.

5. Weak grip strength

What does your handshake have to do with **heart health**? More than you think, according to research published online in May 2015 by the *Lancet*.

Researchers found that grip strength, or the force you exert when you squeeze something as firmly as possible in your hand, is a predictor of heart attack risk. By measuring patients' grip strength with a special device called a handgrip dynamometer, the scientists found that for every 5-kilogram (11-pound) decline, there was a 17 percent greater risk of cardiovascular death and a 7 percent higher risk of having a heart attack.

"Grip strength is as strong a predictor of cardiac death as blood pressure," notes Darryl Leong, assistant professor of medicine at McMaster University in Canada and lead author.

While the cause of the link is unknown, Leong suspects there could be a connection between muscle strength and improved vascular function.

6. Daylight Saving Time

Adjusting the clocks forward (or back) an hour does more than just mess up your **sleep**.

The disturbance to your circadian rhythm — or body clock — also appears to have an impact on your heart. Research presented at the American College of Cardiology's 63rd Annual Scientific Session noted a 25 percent increase in the number of heart attacks on the Monday after the clocks move ahead — or "spring forward" — and we lose an hour, compared with other Mondays during the year. By contrast, there is a 21 percent decrease in the number of heart attacks on the Tuesday in the fall after the clocks "fall back" and we gain an hour.

The sleep disruption from the spring time change is stressful to the body, which researcher Hitinder Gurm, M.D., an interventional cardiologist and associate professor at the University of Michigan, believes can trigger a heart attack in susceptible patients. "We live in a sleep-deprived society and these data indirectly suggest that even small disturbances in sleep can be deleterious for health," Gurm says.

7. The cocktail hour

When it comes to whether alcohol helps or hurts heart health, timing appears to be everything. Research published in the March 2015 issue of the journal *Epidemiology* found that the chances of having a heart attack increased 72 percent in the first hour after drinking alcohol. "Within the first hour after drinking, your heart rate and blood pressure increase, and your blood becomes more sticky, making it more likely to clot," explains lead author Elizabeth Mostofsky, with the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and the Harvard School of Public Health. However, within 24 hours of imbibing, the overall risk of heart attack decreased by 14 percent.

While alcohol may have a protective effect over time, it may also cause a temporary spike in heart attack risk, Mostofsky says. For that reason, "alcohol consumption can be beneficial, but stick with small amounts — no more than one drink a day for women or two for men."

8. Anger issues

If you're blowing your top at every little thing, those outbursts are sending your heart attack risk skyrocketing.

A 2014 study published in the *European Heart Journal* found that patients who described their mood as "furious" or "enraged" had almost a five-fold increase in their risk of heart attack in the two hours after an intense bout of anger. "The key message is that even if you can't prevent anger entirely, lowering how often you get angry or lowering the intensity can be helpful for lowering your heart attack risk," says study coauthor Mostofsky.

9. Traumatic events

It's not an exaggeration to say that heartbreaking events really may break your heart — especially for women.

Research presented at the American Heart Association's 2015 Scientific Sessions found that traumatic life events like the death of a loved one or a life-threatening illness increased heart attack risk by nearly 70 percent among middle-aged and older women.

The research didn't examine the reasons some women are more vulnerable to the effects of deeply distressing life events, but coauthor Michelle A. Albert, M.D., professor of medicine at the University of California San Francisco, speculates that negative experiences might interfere with the body's response to stress, increasing inflammation and stress hormones, which are linked to susceptibility to heart attacks.

Physicians and patients should discuss ways to reduce psychological stress following a personal trauma, Albert adds, in order to reduce cardiovascular risk.

10. Taking common painkillers

You may not have noticed the fine print, but the widely used over-the-counter and prescription painkillers ibuprofen and naproxen (brands like Advil, Motrin and Aleve) come with a warning about possible heart attacks and stroke.

Up to now, the warning has said that these nonaspirin, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) "may cause" an increased risk of heart problems, but new data has convinced the Food and Drug Administration to strengthen the wording to say these medications "cause" a higher risk, and the agency warned that Americans should use the drugs sparingly for a brief time, and at the lowest dose possible.

The FDA said several new studies show the risk of heart attack or stroke can increase even after using NSAIDs for a short time. The risk also appears greater at higher doses.

"Everyone may be at risk — even people without an underlying risk for cardiovascular disease," Judy Racoosin, M.D., deputy director of the FDA's Division of Anesthesia, Analgesia and Addiction Products, said in a written explanation of the new warning.

People who have heart disease, particularly those who recently had a heart attack or cardiac bypass surgery, are at the greatest risk and should discuss taking these drugs with their doctor.

Jodi Helmer regularly contributes health stories to AARP.



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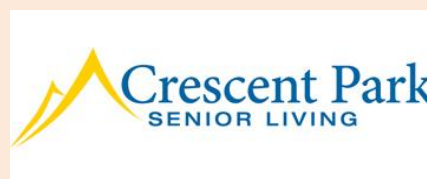
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