

Keep dad healthy for years to come



By Melissa Carr, Special to 24 hours
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Thanks Dad! Father's Day is around the corner and what better way to celebrate it than to learn ways to optimize men's health.

While it is disheartening to know that heart disease and stroke are the top causes of death for men, there are many ways to prevent and treat these illnesses.

It should come as no surprise eating more vegetables is good for you, so pump up your dark leafy greens.

These nutrition packed powerhouses are rich in magnesium, supporting energy production to fuel your heart, improving heart muscle function, and relaxing blood vessels. They are also high in fibre, which lowers bad (LDL) cholesterol and reduces blood pressure.

Traditional Chinese Medicine often blends foods and herbs into a singular category, following the food is medicine principle.

Cinnamon is a commonly used medicinal herb and spice helpful for reducing blood pressure, especially for diabetics. Cardamom, hawthorn berries, garlic, and celery seed also lower elevated blood pressure, lower cholesterol, and improve heart function.

Acupuncture has also been shown to treat hypertension. A 2007 randomized study by Flachskampf and others of 160 outpatients with high blood pressure were given acupuncture or fake acupuncture (as the placebo) over six weeks.

The acupuncture group was found to have significantly lowered blood pressure results, though the blood pressure returned to pre-treatment levels after 3 months of no treatment, demonstrating that ongoing maintenance would be indicated. In a 2013 study by Cevik and Iseri, their group of patients had been taking antihypertensive medication for at least two years with still elevated blood pressure. Treatment with acupuncture brought the blood pressure to healthy levels.

One of the ways acupuncture may be effective in treating heart disease is that it helps reduce the sympathetic nervous system's panic-alarm response. As a result, acupuncture has also been used to treat even those with severe heart failure.

A press release of a 2010 study of acupuncture for heart failure patients quotes the study's lead author Dr. Kristen as stating that acupuncture "influences the autonomic sympathetic nervous system (excitation), boosts the parasympathetic nervous system (relaxation), and also has an anti-inflammatory effect."

Those receiving acupuncture could walk farther after their sessions, and reported improvements in their "general health" and "body pain" scores.

Tell the men in your life—father or not—that you "heart" them by helping them be healthy.

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