

Heart Attack Risk Spikes during Holiday Season How to Avoid a Holiday Heart Attack

This time of year is notorious for heart attacks and heart failures. Holiday overindulgence in sugary foods, alcohol and salt coupled with lack of exercise and increased emotional stress creates a dangerous mix that can take a toll on your heart. Unfortunately, too many people tend to put their own health on the back shelf over the holidays.

FAST FACTS:

- The number of cardiac deaths is higher on Dec. 25 than on any other day of the year, second highest on Dec. 26, and third highest on Jan. 1 (Circulation, 2004).
- Even small increases in body weight, from over indulging during the holidays, can escalate blood pressure and cholesterol making one more susceptible to risk of heart attack.
- Heart-related deaths increase by nearly 5% during the holidays (Circulation, 2004).
- There are an estimated 70,000 heart attacks each year in Canada. That's one heart attack every seven minutes.
- Every seven minutes in Canada, someone dies from heart disease or stroke (Statistics Canada, 2011c).

“People tend to gain weight and take in more salt and sugar over the holidays which can increase blood pressure and cholesterol and put additional stress on the heart,” says Sherry Torkos Pharmacist and Author of *Saving Women's Hearts*. “Many are surprised to learn that high blood pressure and cholesterol can be impacted by food and beverage choices and that they can still enjoy the season and avoid holiday weight gain, with a few easy tips.”

TIMELY TIPS:

- If you are making a plate of food, follow the 3/4 rule. Fill up 3/4 of your plate with healthy items like vegetables, nuts and fruit and fill the other 1/4 with whatever you like. This will help you eat less calories without having to count them.
- It's easy to go to holiday celebrations and fill up on alcohol, egg nog and the like, but drinks have hidden calories that can really add up and excessive alcohol consumption can contribute towards heart disease or stroke. For a healthy alternative, swap your sugared beverages with zero-calorie option like Nestlé Pure Life Sparkling Natural Spring Water that won't leave you feeling bored with your beverage.
- Strive for healthy sleep patterns by sticking to a regular bedtime schedule during the holidays to prevent carbohydrate cravings. If you sleep you won't be as hungry.
- For additional health and wellness tips, click [here](#).

Sherry Torkos is available for interviews to discuss these and other tips on how to stay heart healthy this holiday season.

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