

Heart health starts earlier than you think

September 24 2012

A new multi-national survey reveals the extent of misconceptions about when is the right time to start taking action to prevent cardiovascular disease (CVD). In a four-country survey sample of 4,000 adults, 49 per cent answered age 30 years or older when asked at what age they believe people should start to take action about their heart health to prevent conditions such as heart disease and stroke. The fact is that CVD can affect people of all ages and population groups, and the risk begins early in life through unhealthy diets, lack of physical activity and exposure to tobacco. On World Heart Day, 29th September, the World Heart Federation is calling for people – specifically mothers who are gatekeepers to the home – to take action now to protect their own heart health, as well as that of their children and families to safeguard future generations.

"The fact is that good [heart health](#) starts from childhood. We have an opportunity to change the course of CVD and its global impact, by encouraging and supporting heart-healthy living from an early age. On World Heart Day, over 150 countries are joining together to encourage individuals, families, communities and governments to take action to reduce the [risk of heart disease](#) and stroke amongst women and children," said Professor Sidney C. Smith Jr, MD, President, World Heart Federation.

The new multi-[national survey](#) conducted in Brazil, India, UK and the USA by the World Heart Federation and supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Frédérique Constant, reveals that:

- On average, people believe 32.2 years is the age to take action about their heart health
- By this age, the average heart will have beaten 1.3 billion times, about half of its [life expectancy](#)
- Only one-quarter (26 per cent) of mothers believe young people under 20 years need to take action
- Men aged 40 years and over are most likely to think it's OK to delay taking action, believing an average age of 37.3 years is the time to start caring for heart health

CVD risk factors such as physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, overweight/obesity and tobacco use can have lifelong consequences for men, women and children. During foetal development, maternal malnutrition, both under- and over- nutrition, can increase the chances of developing future risk factors associated with CVD. Children who have a birth weight of less than 2.5 kilograms have approximately double the risk of dying prematurely from coronary heart disease.¹ For expectant mothers, CVD can present a double burden – protecting the heart health of their unborn child and protecting themselves against the risk of CVD, as heart disease is the world's number one killer, affecting 1 in 3 women worldwide.

Peter Stas, CEO, Frédérique Constant, said: "We are pleased to launch our partnership with the World Heart Federation on World Heart Day as it presents an important platform for women to take control of their own hearts in order to protect the heart health of not just themselves but the next generation as well. We are passionate and proud to help educate people about their risk and help avoid the millions of needless deaths that occur each year. By uniting our efforts we strive to give families more quality time together".

Johanna Ralston, Chief Executive Officer, World Heart Federation added "Women have an important role to play as the gatekeepers of the

family and the guardians of health, especially in lower-and middle-income countries, where eight out of 10 CVD-related deaths occur. We are urging all women to adopt heart-healthy behaviours. Taking action to prevent exposure to [risk factors](#) will have a positive impact on children, as they learn by example and will be encouraged to adopt heart-healthy behaviours from a young age. These actions can have a big impact on reducing the number of preventable deaths from [heart disease](#) and stroke".

More information: Read the report: [Urbanization and Cardiovascular Disease: Raising Heart-Healthy Children in Today's Cities](#).

Provided by World Heart Federation

Citation: Heart health starts earlier than you think (2012, September 24) retrieved 17 August 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-09-heart-health-earlier.html>

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