

Your Heart on Vacation



EMOTIONS OF THE HEART

Compared to our global counterparts, Americans are overworked and stressed out. Though we tend to view vacations as an indulgence, studies prove that taking time off is actually a necessity. People who vacation regularly are less stressed and are 30 percent less likely to have a heart attack; missing even one annual vacation puts you at a higher risk of heart disease! And if you think you're doing

your boss a favor by skipping your time off, think again. Overworked employees are actually a financial liability, resulting in higher healthcare costs, higher turnover, more sick leave, lowered job performance, and burnout. However, without proper planning, your vacation can become stressful rather than Zen. Follow these tips for a relaxing, heart-healthy holiday.

- Don't bring your work with you! Constantly checking your phone or your email keeps you from benefiting from your time off and can actually contribute to job burnout.
- If you have recently suffered a heart attack, try vacationing closer to home. Doctors recommend not traveling out of state for a few months after having a heart attack.
- Pack for your health. Make sure that you pack all of your prescription medications – bring enough for the trip plus a bit extra in case there are delays in your travel. Pack medications, your doctor's contact information, and a summary of your medical history in your carry-on luggage so that you are prepared if there is an emergency.

With fast food, buffets, and prepackaged snacks, it is easy to overindulge while on vacation, but there are many ways to avoid temptation. Exercise can also seem more difficult while away, but it is really a chance for you to try fun new ways to stay active and can help you maximize your vacation time, no matter where you choose to go.

- Look for key words when ordering from a menu to guide your choices. Avoid foods with descriptions like *crispy, creamy, buttery, au gratin, basted, or fried*. Instead, look for choices that include words like *steamed, baked, poached, broiled, grilled, roasted, sugar free, and low fat*.
- Having a hard time saying no to tempting choices? Try packing your own lunch and keeping it in the hotel room refrigerator or a cooler to give you more control over your diet.
- Keep busy! Staying active and sightseeing will leave less time for snacking, and keep temptation at bay.
- No matter your destination, keeping active can help you explore new places and get the most out of your time away. Whether you are camping under the stars



or strapping on a pair of skis at a northern lodge, it is easy to find ways to exercise on a countryside holiday. The options are practically endless, including hiking, swimming, skiing, rafting, kayaking, and horseback riding. On the beach, try surfing, snorkeling, swimming, volleyball, or even just a stroll along the water. One of the best ways to get to know a new city is to explore it on foot or bicycle. Most cities have cheap bike rentals that will keep you active and sightseeing all day. Keep your body moving on road trips by getting out of the car at rest stops to walk or play Frisbee. Bringing the dog is a great way to stop the car more often, and take a few minutes to walk and stretch.

- Think spas are just a place to sit around and get pampered? Think again! In addition to the relaxing benefits of massages and aromatherapy, many spas now focus on total wellness and offer yoga, flexercise, and even classes in healthy cooking.

So don't put off that vacation! Talk to a physician about how you and your family can stay healthy by taking some time away. Remember, vacations are not a luxury; they may, in fact, save your life.