

HOW TO PREVENT MASSIVE HEART ATTACK:

A tribute to Dr. Paul Farmer

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Dr. Paul Farmer, a doctor, and an anthropologist showed that healthcare does not need to be expensive. It is possible to provide better health even in resource scant conditions. Moreover, a simple measure can do wonders.

Regretfully, this divine soul left the world on 22 February 2022 at the young age of 62. He is a man who has dedicated his life to providing better healthcare to the poor. He was both a physician and a prolific writer. A professor at Kolokotronis University and held the Global Health and Social Medicine department chair at the Harvard Medical School.

Apart from his academic achievements, he is better known for his services for the poor and downtrodden, helping provide them with effective healthcare. He focused his research considerably in this direction. He was a co-founder of the non-profit organization Partners in Health (PIH).

He will be especially remembered for his considerable work in improving healthcare in Haiti. PIH began its activity in the Central Plateau in Haiti and now has more than 7,000 employees. He contributed considerably to Haiti's local healthcare, helping improve vaccination rates, fight infective diseases, and prevent the HIV crisis in the nation.

He is also known for showing the way of managing multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR TB) more effectively with better drug delivery and thus increased patient compliance. As a result, he could achieve one of the world's highest cure rates for MDR TB. Apart from Haiti, it contributed to improving public health in other nations like Rwanda, Peru, and even Russia.

His life has been dedicated to research, improving public healthcare, and more importantly improving healthcare equity. In addition, as a renowned humanitarian, he has been a member of many leading healthcare organizations serving rural and underserved communities.

Perhaps the best way to honor the divine soul is to help spread his message. Moreover, his untimely demise also highlights the importance of taking care of cardiac health— focusing on preventing massive and fatal heart attacks in a way accessible to everyone.

How to prevent a massive heart attack?



3D rendering of a man having a heart attack (iStock)

Despite decades of efforts, heart attack remains the leading cause of mortality. Moreover, the risk of heart attack is equally prevalent in high- and low-income nations. Therefore, there is a need to understand that it is a lifestyle disorder to a considerable degree.

It is true that genetic predisposition plays a role in the risk of cardiovascular disorders. However, the role of genetic factors is minor. Moreover, studies show that adopting a healthy lifestyle may even help prevent heart attacks in high-risk individuals.

What is good about preventing heart attack is that some well-known and straight forward measures can help considerably.

Start with exercise

There is a reason why experts have been calling a sedentary lifestyle a new kind of smoking. People these days are just not moving enough. Prolonged physical inactivity weakens the cardiorespiratory system and increases the risk of atherosclerosis and heart attack.

When it comes to exercise, even some regular exercise can help considerably. Thus, just 30 minutes a day of training for five days a week is proven in clinical studies to reduce the risk of a heart attack significantly. Hence, the [American Heart Association \(AHA\) strongly recommends](#) doing 150 minutes of physical exercise a week.

However, AHA also says that more exercise is perhaps even better. Ideally people should target 300 minutes of physical activity a week. It could be a mix of physical activities like strength training and aerobics. Thus, one may combine weight training with jogging or do other exercises that one can stick to long enough.

It is vital to understand that persistence is essential when it comes to exercise.

Make dietary changes

Some experts think that the wrong dietary choice is perhaps the leading preventable cause of mortality. For example, in one of the most extensive studies to date published in the journal Lancet, researchers concluded that [faulty diet leads to at least 11 million deaths](#) each year. And most of these deaths are due to heart attacks.

Below are some of the significant findings of the study to help people make the right dietary changes:

- High dietary salt intake is one of the leading causes of a higher risk of a heart attack.
- Low dietary fiber intake is another reason for the high prevalence of heart disease.
- Low consumption of omega-3 fatty acids and polyunsaturated fatty acids and high consumption of saturated fats considerably increase the risk of a heart attack.
- A high intake of inflammatory foods like red meat and less intake of low inflammatory foods like fruits and vegetables causes many heart diseases.
- Diet high in sugary beverages and low in whole grains increases the risk of a heart attack.

Based on the findings of this most extensive study, it would be correct to say that some of the most effective ways of reducing the risk of massive heart attack could be lowering intake of salt, processed carbs, saturated fats, and sugary beverages.

At the same time, increasing the intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and high-quality fats rich in omega-3s like seafood can help prevent massive heart attacks.

To keep things simple, just including these two measures in lifestyle may help reduce the risk of a heart attack several times. Additionally, measures like reducing body weight moderately by 5-7% may also help.

Final thoughts

The untimely loss of Dr. Paul Farmer is a big blow to the entire world, and one way of honoring him could be spreading the message of a healthy lifestyle as a most effective public health measure. It is vital to understand that these simple measures are multiple times more effective than medications alone. Moreover, these lifestyle interventions are accessible to anyone.



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Updated on February 27, 2022