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Heart attacks take a life every 60 seconds— How to cut your risk

When was the last time you thought about your heart health?

If you're over 40-years-old, a leading expert in cardiovascular care suggests that NOW is the time to pay close attention to the factors, which most often trigger heart attacks and learn what you can do to reduce your risks.

“Approximately every 25 seconds an American will experience a coronary event, and every 60 seconds one will die as a result,” says Dr. Debra Braverman, of the Cardiology Department of the Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia. “Fatal heart attacks often come without warning, but most of us don’t realize they are preventable.”

In addition to making lifestyle changes such as exercise, healthy diet, no smoking, and managing the stress in your life, Dr. Braverman says new technology for heart health has emerged to help Americans get relief from the symptoms of angina and heart failure, chest pain, fatigue and shortness of breath, while improving the quality of their lives.

“Have a talk with your doctor about a simple treatment called EECP (Enhanced External Counterpulsation), which is a painless noninvasive, outpatient procedure for improving circulation to the heart,” says Dr. Braverman.

Dr. Braverman says some physicians familiar with EECP therapy say it could eventually replace most of the drugs and invasive surgical procedures currently used to treat cardiovascular

disease.

“Patients receiving EECP therapy lie down on a padded table while three sets of inflatable cuffs are wrapped around their calves, thighs and buttocks,” says Dr. Braverman. “Triggered by the patient’s own heart beat the cuffs are inflated with air during the heart’s resting phase, gently squeezing the lower body and pumping extra blood throughout the body, especially to the heart and coronary arteries.” Just before the pumping phase of the heart, the cuffs deflate, making it easier for the heart to pump blood throughout the body.

“EECP therapy creates additional blood flow through the arteries and this increased flow stimulates the cells which line the arteries, improving their health and actually reversing arterial inflammation, constriction, and the hardening of the arteries often associated with cardiovascular disease.

Dr. Braverman says EECP therapy is often prescribed by cardiologists whose patients have already undergone prior invasive procedures like stenting and coronary bypass but still suffer from chest pains and other angina equivalent symptoms (fatigue and shortness of breath) which are also the related symptoms experienced by heart failure patients.

“EECP therapy can relieve pain and return mobility to patients who are ineligible or not good candidates to receive invasive procedures, but we feel that EECP therapy can be an effective first option for millions suffering from certain types of coronary artery disease prior to any other interventional procedures,” she says.

Dr. Debra Braverman is a graduate of Cornell University Medical College (now known as the Weill Medical College of Cornell University) and is board-certified by the American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.