

## Tips for Defusing Anger

When you lose your temper, your body reacts in ways that significantly increase your risk for heart disease. Emotional outbursts release stress hormones that cause variations in heart rate and activate blood-clotting mechanisms. These responses can also increase cholesterol production and make platelets more sticky, causing them to clump, which promotes the formation of arterial plaque.

In fact, anger triples the risk of heart disease.

Fortunately, training and counseling can help those who are prone to heart-threatening outbursts learn to control them and thereby reduce stress-related heart disease. Here are some tips for doing that:

- Seek counseling, especially if you already have heart disease.
- Identify your triggers - events or behaviors that irritate you - and analyze why those things bother you.
- Reason with yourself; stop and think about how important a particular incident is in the "big picture." Should you really be wasting time and emotion on it?
- Avoid overstimulation by reducing your use of nicotine, caffeine, alcohol, and high-sugar foods.
- Get some exercise regularly.
- Relax - try meditation, yoga, or deep breathing.
- Look for the humor in irritating situations; don't take yourself too seriously.

If you want to change and are willing to work at it, you can develop a calmer, more positive approach to life. Besides helping your heart, this will also make every day more pleasant for you and those around you.

**Source:** *Hostility and the Heart. The Cleveland Clinic Heart Advisor, Nov. 2001.*