Your Heart Is Most Vulnerable on This One Day Transcript

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Holiday Heart Attack Risk

December 25th isn't just Christmas Day. It's actually the deadliest day of the year for your heart. Across multiple countries, heart attack deaths spiked by more than 30% during the holidays.

And tell you what, Christmas day and New Year's, they're the absolute worst. In the real killer, it's not just turkey and dessert, It is stress, silently attacking your arteries.

I'll tell ya what. in the next few minutes, I am going to give you a very specific plan so you can enjoy Christmas without becoming a sadistic. I'm Dr.

Columbus Batiste, an interventional cardiologist. And listen, I've spent way too many holidays rushing patients to the cath lab when they should have been opening gifts with their family.

In this video, i'm going to break down the stress, right? That stress equation that triggers holiday heart attacks and give you three simple strategies to protect yourself.

Now they just stick with me because I'm also going to show you why the thing most people use to relax is secretly increasing their stress and their heart attack risk overall.

So here's what most actually don't realize. Your heart risk during the holidays doesn't just bump up a little bit. It actually jumps. Overall, there's about a 5% increase in heart attacks, but some groups, they see increases of up to 15 to 37%. Now, if you're over 65, living with diabetes, high blood pressure, or already have heart disease, I'm gonna tell you what, that period between December 22nd and January 2nd may be the highest risk stretch of your entire year.

Sorry, so quick check in. If you or anyone you love fits into that high risk group, keep watching and maybe even send this video when you're done. I want you to put like a little heart emoji inside the chat if you know someone who has heart disease.

Because listen, studies from Sweden, Norway, and United States, all different healthcare systems, different environments, they all report the same pattern.

More people die from heart attacks on December 25th than any other single day of the year.

Why Holiday Stress Triggers Heart Attacks

And here's the scariest part. Many of those deaths happen before people ever make it to the hospital. So let me put a human face on this. I remember getting a call one Christmas Eve and and I was just kinda getting things ready for the young kids at home, my son and my daughter.

And I got a call about a man in his early 50s. He was a dad, he was husband. he stressed about money, as many people are during the holidays. Trying to make the holiday special for everyone.

Ignored the chest pressure all day because he didn't want to ruin Christmas. I'm gonna tell you what, by the time he came in, the damage to his heart muscle, it was massive.

That's what we're trying to prevent for you. Now, we always, always blame the food, right? I'm a corporate as well. The turkey, the cookies, late night leftovers.

But the real driver? It's stress. And stress, it works like a simple equation that stress equals demands minus

resources. Tell you what, during the holidays, your demands, they skyrocket.

family obligations, travel logistics, financial pressures from gifts, cooking, cleaning, hosting, work deadlines before the break, family conflict or loneliness.

At the same time, your resources, time your sleep, energy, coping skills, and your money and even your support are stretched thin or completely drained.

When demands outweigh the resources you get stress. Not just I'm a little tense, but real, measurable, artery damaging stress. And here's a deadly twist.

Most people, they reach for a fake resource. Alcohol, right? They think it'll help them relax and take the edge off just a bit. But alcohol actually doesn't lower your demands.

It actually adds new demands and it steals your real resources. Now I'll show you exactly how it does that in a few moments. But I need you to stop and think about your coronary arteries and what's happening beneath the surface.

Your coronal arteries are like old plumbing in the house. Well, it may be newer for some and older for others, depending on your age. And over time, that plaque, builds up in walls.

That's what we call atherosclerosis. Now, most of the year, the plaque just sits there. It's not causing any obvious problems. You don't even know what is going on.

But during the holidays, stress is the sledgehammer that can crack those pipes. And here's what happens when stress hits your body, right? Your sympathetic nervous system, that fight or flight, it goes into overdrive.

It dumps adrenaline and cortisol into your bloodstream. Those hormones, they make your pressure spike up as they squeeze and tense down. They make you heart rate beat faster, pitter patter, and then making your blood vessels tighten and making you blood stickier and more likely to clot.

So if you already have plaque in your arteries, that stress response, it can rupture the plaque. Your body then forms a big clot on that ruptured and that clot, it blocks the artery.

That's the stuff a heart attack is made of.

Eat a Soup or Salad First

So there's actually advanced imaging scans that have shown a plaque rupture is the number one cause of heart attacks, especially during the winter holidays.

that's not random. And timing matters. The highest risk window isn't Christmas afternoon when everyone is sleepy and relaxing. It's Christmas Eve and the morning of December 25th.

When stress, fatigue, that last minute shopping, the travel, alcohol, poor sleep, they all collide. And on top of it, most doctor's offices are closed.

So let's go back to the equation. Stress equals demands minus resources. This is where people make a fatal mistake. They try to plug alcohol into the resources side of the equation.

But alcohol doesn't behave like a resource. It actually behaves like another demand on your heart, on you brain, and on sleep. So what can you do instead?

We have to talk about three specific strategies that can actually stack the equations back in your favor, building true resources. What's the first tip?

Well, you need to start every holiday meal, listen to me now, with a soup or salad. Now it's not just etiquette, it is protective. Most people think holiday damage is all about what you eat, but the science shows the order you ate it actually changes what happens inside your arteries.

So there are randomized clinical trials that show that when people start their meal with high fiber, low calorie food, like vegetable soup, or a big salad, they see better results than people who eat the same food all mixed together on one plate.

End of the question, does it really matter that much? Yes, it does. So when you eat your vegetables and your fiber first, guess what? They create this physical buffer in your stomach and in the intestines.

They slow down how fast the sugar and the fat are absorbed and they blunt the spikes in blood sugar, and triglycerides after a meal. Now these spikes are what damage your arteries and a fan the flames of inflammation and increasing that risk of plaque rupture.

So you remember the plumbing analogy, right? So we have plumbing in our walls, eating that fiber first. It's like putting a filter in a pressure regulator on your pipes before the heavy flow hits.

So here's what your Christmas meal game plan should be. Of course, I want you to ditch some meat, but you may not be ready to do that. And that's okay, maybe, it depends.

But before you touch, and the other stuff, that turkey or the casseroles. I need you to start with a big bowl of vegetable soup, a minestrone lentil, butternut squash, I'm getting hungry, or a large salad with dark green leafy vegetables, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, beans, all the fixings and a vinaigrette, right?

Small amount. Don't have a ranch soup with few pieces of lettuce. You need to have robust amount of green, leafy, vegetables. Now, you need give yourself 10 to 15 minutes to eat that first course.

Let it settle in. Then you move on to everything else. Too far powerful things are going to happen when you do this. Your blood sugar and your triglycerides, they are not going spike as high.

And you will naturally eat less, I said it, sorry, because of the heavy foods because your stomach has already activated the fullness signals. You know those GOP1 agonists?

This is nature's GOp1 Agonist. It isn't about willpower. It's about biology. Its about sequence. And if your family doesn't traditionally start with a soup or a salad, that's okay.

You can actually be the one who brings it. Or you can buy it from a restaurant and bring it in. Now if you're hosting, make plant-based sides the star, right?

Roasted Brussels sprouts, kale salad, cranberries, pecans, white bean and veggie soup, all of, you figure it out. There's great stuff out there. But if you're a guest, here's what you can do.

Show up with a big salad and say, I've got the first course covered, right? They're gonna love you because you are bringing something to the meal and you have food with family and friends.

Over time, people who eat a plant-forward diet, lots of fruits and vegetables and whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts and seeds, they have as much as a 16% lower risk of heart disease.

So during these high-risk times like the holidays, that protection, it really matters. So food doesn't just fill you up. They deliver antioxidants, anti-inflammatory compounds that will improve your cholesterol, lower your blood pressure, stabilize that blood sugar, reduce the risk of rhythm problems.

Why Alcohol Raises Risk

Here's the key. Like atrial fibrillation. Why? Because the infusing of potassium and magnesium from dietary sources which can help offset the toxins that one may have from the alcohol.

And so we understand that this spikes around the holidays. This approach is at the core of a plant-based dietary eating pattern that you find in the Mediterranean regions and other plant forward diets.

I'll tell you, there are so many big trials have shown and demonstrated that, this dietary pattern can cut heart attack risk by up to 30%. That's not hype, that's evidence.

Alright, check in. If you're willing to try this whole plant first at your next holiday meal, I'll need you to type it in there. Plant first, right? Let's start a whole chain that's there and I want you put in the comments so I know you are with me and others know too as well.

Alright now let's talk about the fake resources that quietly tear up the entire plan. So we have to learn to understand why alcohol actually is a fake resource that increases your stress.

In order to do that, we need to go back to the equation of stress equals demands minus resources. Most people at holiday parties, they treat alcohol as a resource.

I mean, something that helps them cope with those awkward conversations, the financial stress, or the family tension. But here's the truth, alcohol is not heart-healthy.

And it does not solve the stress equation. Every major cardiology organization, American College of Cardiology, the American Heart Association, European Society of cardiologists, they now agree.

If you don't drink, don´t start. if you do drink less is better, but none is best. Alright, so let's talk numbers for a moment. Binge drinking as we describe it, it's more than four drinks in one sitting for women, more then five drinks for men.

It doubles your risk of a heart attack compared to non-drinkers and light drinkers. those irregular heavy drinkers like you know they say i don't drink much except for the weekends and at parties well this too raises your risk of heart events that means heart attacks that needs atrial fibrillation that makes heart failure by about 45 percent compared to steady light intake i'm not saying have the state like intake but i am saying the weekend is not better that's where the holiday the term holiday heart syndrome really comes from, binge drinking.

Now this can spike your blood pressure and I'll tell you what, the trigger, it can also trigger dangerous heart rhythms like atrial fibrillation where your top part of your heart begins to quiver and clot can form.

This makes your blud more likely to clot and as I mentioned, all of this, can unfold within hours. You combine that with a huge holiday meal, poor sleep, emotional stress and you, my friend, have created the perfect storm for a heart attack.

Let's plug this back into the stress equation. Alcohol actually increases your demands on your body. Higher blood pressure, unstable heart rhythm, inflammation, worse blood sugar, triglyceride spikes.

And it destroys your resources. Why? It impairs your judgment. It disrupts your sleep. and less resilient the next day. So it feels like a real resource in the moment, but it actually behaves like gasoline on the fire.

And here's the part, many people just have no idea that they're binge drinking. A toast at arrival, a glass of wine at dinner, cocktail later, champagne at midnight.

That's four drinks. For many, that hits the binge territory. My practical advice? Don't drink. Realistically, decide your limit before the party. And if you drink, cap it off at one.

Alternate any alcohol with a glass of water, right?

Build Real Stress-Reducing Resources

Even better, choose sparkling water. Lemon, lime, berries, and a thoughtful mocktail. Have that and toast. Your heart and your sleep will be far better off.

Now listen, if this is helpful so far, even if it's hard to hear, hit that like button. so more families see this before Christmas. It really does help YouTube, it's gonna help push this message out there and we need folks to understand there's power in choices.

Now since we can't always lower the demands during the holidays, let's talk about how to build real resources. So the first tip, number three, listen, you need to lower your stress, right?

That's not always easy. And I actually feel bad about saying lower stress. About increasing your resilience. We can always control those holiday demands, but we CAN build our resources, that may work to lower your risk of a heart attack.

And so here are three that actually work. Resource number one, it's our breath work, we have to breathe. Now I know when I get stressed, I tend to hold my breath, right?

And when stress fires up your fire flight, i'll tell you, im not the only one. It can actually make you hit the brakes using your breath. And so I want you to try this with me.

Breathe in through your nose for a count of four. Hold it for count four, breathe out for account of six. And that exhale longer, right? It activates your parasympathetic nervous system, which is the rest and digest mode.

This actually lowers your heart rate. That's why you see golfers out there taking deep breath. Before free throws, basketball players will take a deep breathe in.

They're lowering their heartrate, they're calming that stress in that moment in order for them to perform. So you do three cycles of this before a stressful interaction, before you speak up at dinner, or when you feel your chest tightening.

It only takes about 30 seconds. All right, what's the second real resource? Three words, stop, challenge, and choose. So when feel overwhelmed, try this mental reset.

Stop, just pause for a moment. Challenge, ask yourself, listen, do I really have to do all this? Is this expectation real or am I putting it on myself?

Third, choose, pick one thing you can drop, delegate or delay or simplify. Now, you can also use stop, challenge, and choose for your eating patterns that stop.

Do I really want this? Challenge yourself as to why you're feeling the need to eat whatever you were eating and then choose how to proceed. Instead of just powering through, your actually reducing the demands in the stress equation.

All right, last, I need you to have your tribe with you. I needed you invest in true supportive relationships, especially during the holiday time because guess what?

Everyone at the holiday gathering is a resource. You know this and I know these too as well. But the people who genuinely support you, these people, they're medicinal.

They are therapeutic. Even a 10-minute phone call or a walk with someone who really cares about you can lower your cortisol and reduce your cardiovascular stress.

That's powerful. So you should be intentional. Make a list of the safe people. Schedule a call, walk, or a quiet

conversation with at least one of them during the holiday time.

Because guess what? Social connection isn't extra. It is heart medicine. We have to make time for what's important. All right, last, I have leave you with this.

The warning signs that you cannot ignore.

Warning Signs and When to Call 911

despite all this you may still have a bout of chest discomfort and so all of this is about prevention but we also need to talk about emergencies because when you recognize the symptoms you have to then act quickly so stress trigger heart attacks they look like every other heart attack right common symptoms they chest pressure tightness pain like elephants sitting on your chest common but not always in everyone short of breath pain in the arm or neck or jaw or back also common we've seen it on tv nausea and sweating a sense of doom extreme fatigue these are all common symptoms but here's the catch women and people with diabetes may have more subtle symptoms a little back discomfort A little nausea, a little short of breath, A lil' fatigue, without obvious chest pain.

Here's what I need you to know. If you notice these symptoms, especially if they come on with stress or activity, don't wait it out. Call 911. Don't drive yourself, Don' talk yourself into believing it's indigestion or anxiety.

Time is muscle, and I'll tell you what, every minute counts. So I don' want to meet you or anyone you love on a holiday in the emergency room. or any other day.

I want you to remember the real equation that stress equals demands minus resources. We all need to lower the demands where we can and begin the process of building real resources that starts with our plates, plants first on your plate, simple breath work, time with people in intimate relationships who truly support us.

And don't lean on fake resources like alcohol that secretly they increase, they're sabotaging your health. The mom who's stressed about making everything perfect.

The sister, the friend who drinks to get through the family drama. the relative with diabetes or heart disease who is always brushing off symptoms. They need this more than ever and need it before December 25th.

Now there's an old proverb I love, if you want to go fast, go alone. If you wanna go far, Go together. Let's go far together by building healthier hearts and stronger communities.

I need you to like it, share it. Send it especially in your family group chat. And you might actually save a life this holiday season. All right. Dr. Batiste, I'll catch you next time.