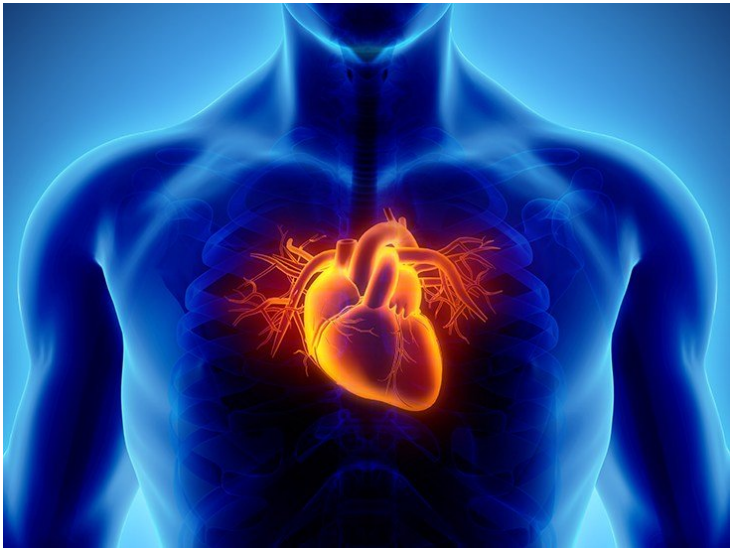


Risk of heart failure increases 4 to 5 times during winter in people with CAD

15 January 2019 | News

Research has shown that each 1 °C reduction in temperature is associated with about 200 additional heart attacks – there are 53% more such cases in winter



Statistics indicate that there has been an increase of about 300% in the incidence of coronary artery disease (CAD) in Indians, especially in the last three decades.

Approximately 12% of those affected are in urban India. Apart from the common risk factors including regular consumption of processed food and a sedentary lifestyle, the condition can exacerbate in winter. Those with a family history of the condition must be more careful and take precautionary measures.

Research has shown that each 1 °C reduction in temperature is associated with about 200 additional heart attacks – there are 53% more such cases in winter. Lower temperatures bring about a variation in the plasma level of hormones and blood clotting factors. In winter months, the heart must also work harder to maintain body temperature. Such hyperactivity can cause blood pressure to increase and lead to further narrowing of blood vessels in people with existing heart vessel blockage.

Speaking about this, Dr Manoj Kumar, Director & Head - Cardiac Cath Lab, Max Super Specialty Hospital said, “Sudden change in temperature causes thermal stress for the body and the latter must work more to maintain a constant temperature. This type of stress has a profound and direct effect on blood viscosity, making it thicker, stickier, and more likely to clot (known as ‘angry platelets’). Low temperatures can cause blood vessels to narrow which restricts blood flow throughout the body. This further leads to a reduction in the amount of oxygen that reaches the different organs including the heart. The heart, therefore, has to work doubly hard to ensure that enough blood and oxygen is pumped to the entire body. Over time, this can lead to heart failure, especially in people with coronary artery disease (CAD). Heart failure does not indicate that the heart has stopped working. However, it is a life-threatening condition wherein the heart is unable to work to its optimum capacity.”

People tend to ignore the symptoms that can indicate an underlying heart problem, especially in the winter months. Some of these include unusual gastric problems, profuse sweating, and any pain lasting more than 15 minutes.

Adding further, Dr Kumar, said, "It is imperative to avoid any stress on the heart in winter. Avoid tasks that can exhaust you. Overindulgence in alcohol or processed food can lead to atrial fibrillation over time. This is a condition that causes irregular heartbeat and is also known as arrhythmia. Eat in small quantities at regular intervals. In individuals with extreme complications, treatment such as radiofrequency ablation, implantable cardioverter defibrillator, and supportive care such as cardiac monitoring may be needed."

Patients with atherosclerosis and angina may need a surgical procedure known as angioplasty. During angioplasty, a catheter with a balloon at its tip is inserted into a blocked coronary artery and inflated to clear the artery and improve blood flow. In stenting, a small, self-expanding, metal mesh tube called stent is placed inside a coronary artery and prevents it from re-closing. Nowadays, there are drug-eluting stents available which are coated with a medicine.

This medicine helps further prevent the arteries from re-closing. Another option for patients with atherosclerosis and angina, is coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG), in which a healthy artery or vein from the body is connected, or grafted, to the blocked coronary artery. The grafted artery or vein bypasses the blocked portion of the coronary artery.