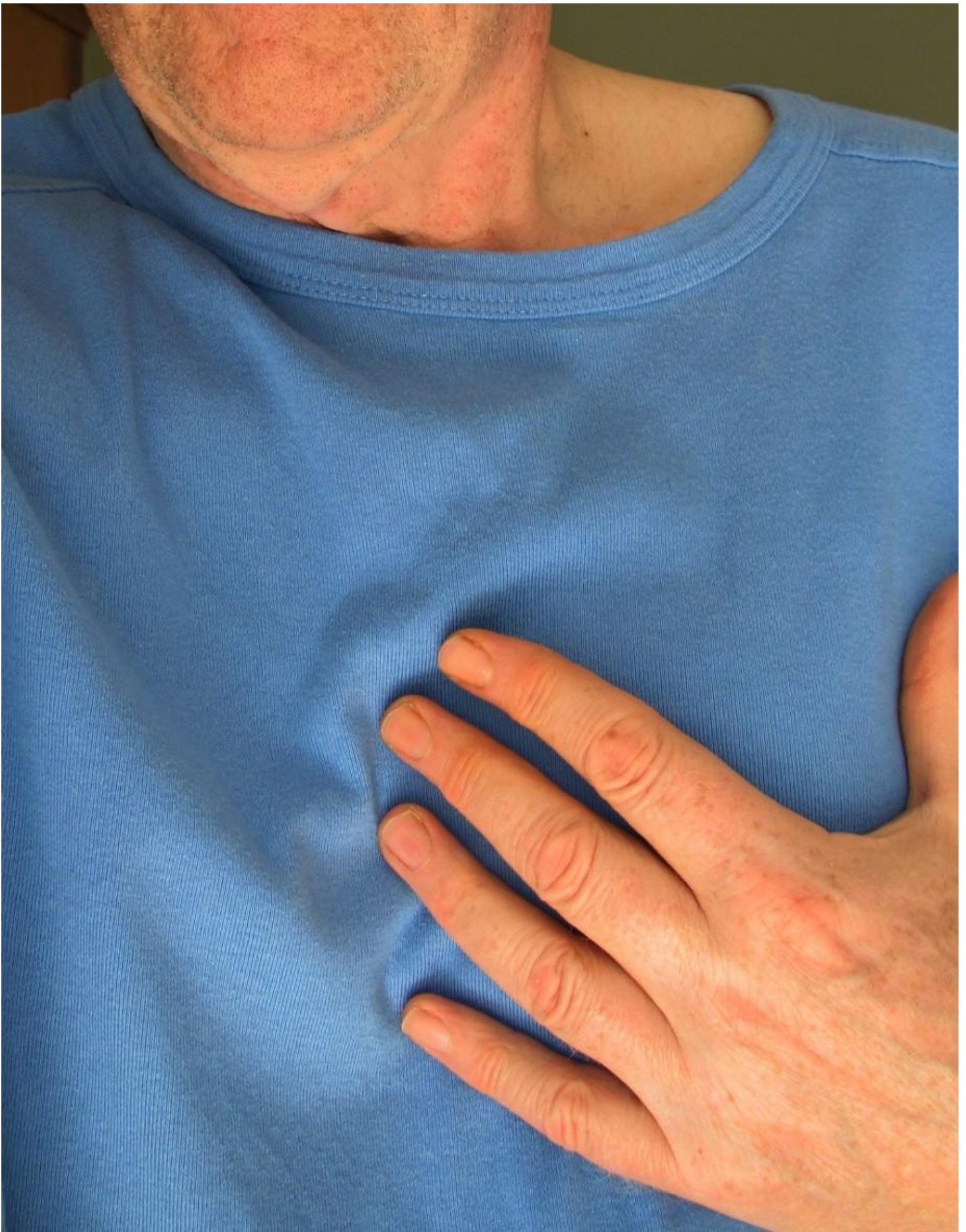




New Study Highlights Connection Between Depression and Heart Disease Patients

A recent study has found that people with coronary artery disease and who subsequently develop depression are twice as likely to face the threat of death compared to patients with coronary artery disease but who do not develop depression.

Apparently, this is true regardless of whether symptoms of depression begin to manifest soon after diagnosis or even several years later. It highlights the importance of screening patients for signs of depression after a diagnosis of coronary artery disease.



There have been several studies into the connection between depression and heart disease and it's been found that developing depression after being diagnosed with coronary artery disease is the single biggest predictor of death, even after all other factors are accounted for. It didn't matter how long or short the period of depression was, as the risk of dying was still double that of those heart patients without any signs of depression. Other factors that were

taken into account included diabetes, kidney failure, having a stroke or heart attack, heart failure, and age.

It was also shown that the [relationship between heart disease and depression](#) was bidirectional, meaning that having heart disease could increase the likelihood of developing depression while developing depression may worsen the outcome for people with heart disease.

To carry out the study, heart patients suffering from depression were placed into various subcategories depending on how long after their heart event depression was diagnosed. Out of all participants, some 15% were diagnosed with depression at some point, with 27% being diagnosed within a year of their heart problems. Another 24% were diagnosed between one and three years afterward, while 15% were diagnosed between three and five years. Nearly 37% were diagnosed at least five years after their initial diagnosis.

This shows that screening for depression after being diagnosed with [heart disease](#) should be an ongoing process, just like regular testing for high cholesterol and high blood pressure. The discovery is extremely important for heart doctors as people diagnosed with coronary artery disease do not tend to have as long a life expectancy and as their peers. This is even though life expectancy has increased thanks to the development of better surgeries combined with more aggressive treatments for identified risk factors and better therapies.

Now it looks as if depression could be one risk factor that if diagnosed and properly treated could make a real difference to life expectancy. Patients with depression tended to be significantly younger, were more often female and diabetic and may have been previously diagnosed with depression.

One thing the study didn't explain is why this connection exists. It could be because people with depression may feel less inclined or less able to follow the treatment plan prescribed by their cardiologist. They may be less likely to take their medications correctly and to follow healthier diets or to take enough exercise.



Overall, people without depression are more likely to stick to their treatment plans. This doesn't mean that everyone will follow this pattern but simply that people with depression tend to be less compliant. The physiological changes that occur with a diagnosis of depression may also impact the link between depression and heart disease.

How Following a Treatment Plan Can Prolong Life Expectancy

Cardiologists will often work with patients who have been diagnosed with heart disease as well as with other health professionals including nutritionists and physical therapists. Patients participating in a proper cardiac rehabilitation program have a far better chance of enjoying a fulfilling life in the future. Unfortunately having any kind of cardiovascular event or heart attack does increase the risk of suffering from another at some point in the future.

So, what involved with a treatment plan?



This is a program that is custom-designed to help treat issues around heart health. It includes information on nutrition and on dieting safely if you need to lose a little weight. Regular exercise is another important factor and your treatment plan is highly likely to include an appropriate physical fitness program which will be designed to get you exercising at the correct activity level, gradually increasing this activity as you become fitter and stronger. You may also receive education on how to monitor your heart rate and how to measure your body fat so you can assess your progress. Your treatment program will include regular assessments with your cardiologist and other health specialists.

Taking this course of action can be an extremely positive experience, especially if you are prone to depression as exercise is a known factor in reducing this risk or in reducing the symptoms. Additionally, it can also help just knowing you are taking control of your health.