

## EXPERT ADVICE

# How your pharmacist can help with heart health

The pharmacist complements the role of doctors by helping those suffering from heart disease as well as those who are at a high risk of heart disease to better manage their medication.

**Q:** What can I do to reduce the risk of compromising the health of my heart?

**A:** Your heart's health depends on a number of risk factors. Some risk factors are beyond your control such as age, gender and family history, while some correctable risk factors include cigarette smoking, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes.

For those who have correctable factors, controlling these factors can help to lower your risk of developing heart attacks.

If you are taking medication on a regular basis to reduce your risk of a heart attack, getting to know your pharmacist is a smart move to help you achieve better compliance.

The pharmacist is a valuable member of your professional health care team, complementing doctors by helping you to manage your medication better.

Compliance is vital if you want to obtain maximum benefit from your medication. Being compliant is easier when you have more knowledge about the medication and when you understand why you need to do so.

As the expert on drugs, the pharmacist can help to answer your questions about the medication you are taking such as how it works and what it does.

Some of the issues you could share with your pharmacist regarding your medication include:

- How the medication makes you feel. Do report any unusual signs or symptoms;
- Your problems in following instructions such as what to do when you miss a dosage or what happens when you take the medication inconsistently;
- Your concerns about your condition such as your blood pressure level or your glucose level;
- Your concerns about the medication such as any special precautions or side effects; and



### Healthy heart practices:

- Quit smoking. Smoking hardens the blood vessels leading to stroke and other heart-related diseases;
  - Exercise regularly. It helps you to reduce your risk of heart disease by increasing your good cholesterol and lowering your blood pressure; and
  - Cut down on unhealthy fats. Avoiding saturated fats in fatty meats, poultry skin, organ meats and coconut milk, and trans fatty acids can help you to cut down on bad cholesterol.
- Other medications or supplements you are currently taking for your health problems. This is to avoid any interactions or possibilities that may affect absorption levels of the drug.

Talking to your pharmacist about your medication and health condition also helps you to overcome any worries that you might have in taking care of your own health.

Your pharmacist can further lend support and motivation, which does go a long way in helping you cope with the condition.

If you haven't had the chance to know a pharmacist, it is never too late to get in touch with one now. Make a trip to your local pharmacy today. **OHI**