

A GUIDE TO MAINTAINING HEART HEALTH WITH A PITUITARY CONDITION



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WHAT IS AN ADRENAL CRISIS?

The pituitary gland makes hormones that help regulate different systems in the body, including the cardiovascular system. If the pituitary gland doesn't work properly hormonal imbalances can have an effect on the heart.

Having a pituitary condition, may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD).¹

CVD is the collective name for a group of diseases affecting the heart and blood vessels. Having CVD may result in a heart attack or stroke.

Pituitary disorders may be associated with metabolic changes which increase the risk of heart disease. For example, people with pituitary conditions are at higher risk of having high blood pressure, high blood glucose levels, type 2 diabetes, and increased body fat.

Fortunately, there is a lot you can do to look after your heart and reduce your risk of CVD, even if you have a pituitary condition. These are the same health recommendations for people with and without pituitary disorders.

MANAGE YOUR CONDITION

Have regular checkups with your specialists to monitor your pituitary condition and to make sure that your medication is working properly. You should also follow your recommended treatment plan, ensuring you take any medication recommended by your doctor.

HAVE REGULAR HEART CHECKS

Regular heart checks are important for everyone. A heart health check involves discussions about your lifestyle, medical and family health history and checking your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels. Your doctor will be able to assess your risk and give specific advice on what you can do to improve your heart health or reduce your risk of heart problems.

MANAGE RISK FACTORS

If you have other conditions that increase your risk for CVD, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's recommendations. This may include monitoring blood pressure or blood sugar levels at home, taking medication, and lifestyle changes.

EAT A HEALTHY DIET

A healthy diet can help keep your heart healthy and should focus on:

- fruits and vegetables, including legumes and pulse
- lean proteins (e.g. meat, poultry, fish and eggs)
- healthy fats (e.g. olive oil, avocado, nuts and seeds).

Limit processed foods high in fat, salt and sugar, and choose water or sugar-free drinks over soft-drinks and juices.

Some pituitary conditions can cause weight gain while other conditions may mean you need to avoid certain foods.² In these cases, working with a dietitian can be helpful.

Be physically active

Aim for regular physical activity. Australian guidelines recommend adults should do either:³

- 2.5 to 5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity – such as a brisk walk, golf, mowing the lawn or swimming
- 1.25 to 2.5 hours of vigorous intensity physical activity – such as jogging, fast cycling, soccer or netball
- an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous activities.

Strengthening activities such as push-ups, squats or lunges, or lifting weights are also recommended 2 days a week.

While these are recommended levels, it's important to be mindful of any potential limitations. For example:

- if you have acromegaly you may experience joint pain, which can affect how much exercise you can do.
- if you have Cushing's disease you may have muscle weakness, which will impact your ability to exercise
- If you have hypopituitarism you may need to adjust exercise intensity.

If you find it difficult to do scheduled sessions of exercise, aim to build more movement into your day. Research shows that even short bursts of physical activity can lower risks of heart attack and stroke.⁴

Always consult your doctor before starting a new exercise regimen and follow their advice. You can also work with an accredited exercise physiologist who can develop a plan based on your unique needs.

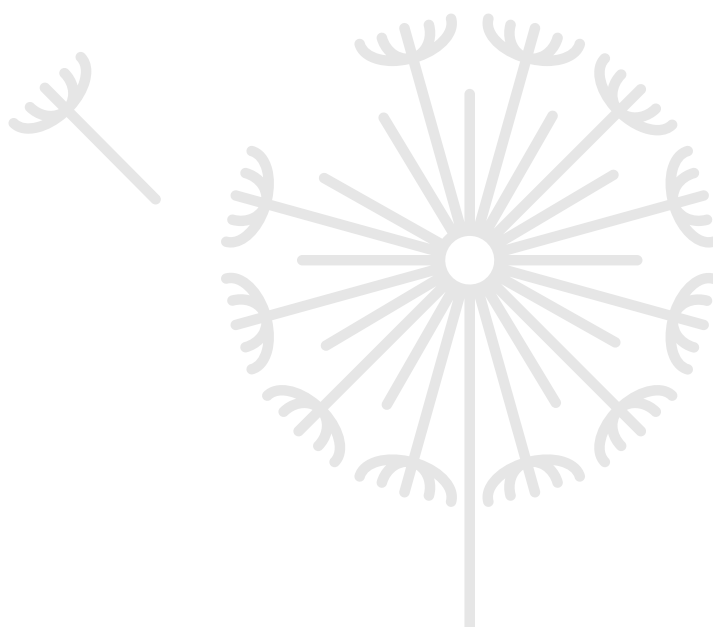


QUIT SMOKING AND LIMIT ALCOHOL

Smoking increases your risk for heart disease and other chronic conditions, so if you smoke, take steps to quit.

You should also limit how much alcohol you drink as there is strong evidence that drinking alcohol does not have any heart health benefits.⁵

While pituitary conditions can complicate heart health management, with proper medical care, lifestyle modifications, and regular monitoring, many patients can effectively maintain cardiovascular health. Work closely with your endocrinologist and cardiologist to develop a comprehensive care plan tailored to your individual needs.



MORE INFORMATION

The Australian Pituitary Foundation provides social support for patients and carers, and has published a range of patient resources on pituitary conditions and treatments.

For more information, please visit our website: www.pituitary.asn.au

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