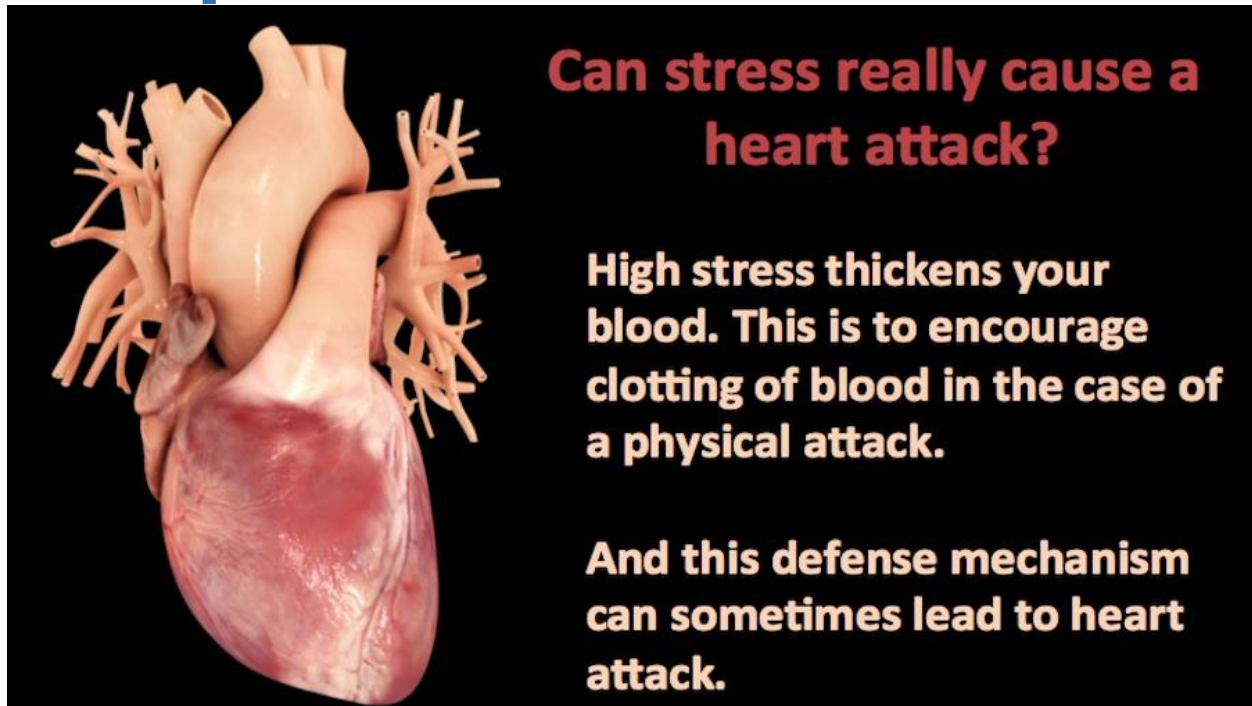


# Holiday stressors cause spike in heart attacks



Christmas music, family and hot meals warm the heart, but all of it can quite literally be heartbreaking.

According to a study published by the American Heart Association, there's a two-week spike in heart attacks between Christmas Day and January 7.

Our Yvonne Thomas explains what cardiologists call the "Christmas Coronary."

Some travelers say getting ready for Christmas can be one bumpy ride.

"It's a little rush, rush," said traveler Grace Spells. "You're walking around thinking did you get everything? You don't want to leave anything. You pack all your Christmas stuff in real tight?"

Traveler Jerry Sprague said he and his wife got a late start on the highway to visit their son.

"My wife stayed home to pack up the truck for our visit," said Sprague. "I got off work at four and truck still wasn't packed."

Packing cars, loading gifts, there's always something to do.

“Yeah, it’s a little stressful,” said Spells.

If you're not careful, you could be visiting a doctor instead of your loved ones for Christmas.

“Typically we see a variety of different things,” said cardiologist Gary Daniel. “But the one people are most concerned about is heart attacks.”

Studies show that the number of heart attacks increases by more than thirty percent during the winter.

“We'll see people come in with chest pains and most of the time it does turn out to be a heart attack,” said Daniel.

Doctors call it Christmas Coronary, triggered by holiday stressors and bad habits.

“During this time of year people are overeating quite a bit,” said Daniel. “Sometimes we're drinking alcohol into excess, not always taking medications appropriately.” Cardiologists say if you're not feeling well, don't make an excuse.

“You have people coming over for the holidays, you have a lot going on,” said Daniel. “Or you don't want to be in the hospital.”

Doctors say come visit them anyway, so that you can make that journey back home for the New Year. Cardiologist Gary Daniel says cold temperatures can restrict your blood vessels making your heart work harder.

Daniel says it's best to bundle up and stay hydrated. You should also skip or reduce the amount of Christmas ham you eat or the high-fat eggnog you drink.



**Medical EXPOSE**

<http://www.medicalexpose.com/>

## The Holmes-Rahe Life Stress Inventory

### The Social Readjustment Rating Scale

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Mark down the point value of each of these life events that has happened to you during the previous year. Total these associated points.

Life Event	Mean Value
1. Death of spouse	100
2. Divorce	73
3. Marital Separation from mate	65
4. Detention in jail or other institution	63
5. Death of a close family member	63
6. Major personal injury or illness	53
7. Marriage	50
8. Being fired at work	47
9. Marital reconciliation with mate	45
10. Retirement from work	45
11. Major change in the health or behavior of a family member	44
12. Pregnancy	40
13. Sexual Difficulties	39
14. Gaining a new family member (i.e.. birth, adoption, older adult moving in, etc)	39
15. Major business readjustment	39
16. Major change in financial state (i.e.. a lot worse or better off than usual)	38
17. Death of a close friend	37
18. Changing to a different line of work	36
19. Major change in the number of arguments w/spouse (i.e.. either a lot more or a lot less than usual regarding child rearing, personal habits, etc.)	35
20. Taking on a mortgage (for home, business, etc..)	31
21. Foreclosure on a mortgage or loan	30
22. Major change in responsibilities at work (i.e. promotion, demotion, etc.)	29
23. Son or daughter leaving home (marriage, attending college, joined mil.)	29
24. In-law troubles	29
25. Outstanding personal achievement	28
26. Spouse beginning or ceasing work outside the home	26
27. Beginning or ceasing formal schooling	26
28. Major change in living condition (new home, remodeling, deterioration of neighborhood or home etc.)	25
29. Revision of personal habits (dress manners, associations, quitting smoking)	24
30. Troubles with the boss	23
31. Major changes in working hours or conditions	20
32. Changes in residence	20
33. Changing to a new school	20
34. Major change in usual type and/or amount of recreation	19
35. Major change in church activity (i.e.. a lot more or less than usual)	19
36. Major change in social activities (clubs, movies,visiting, etc.)	18
37. Taking on a loan (car, tv,freezer,etc)	17
38. Major change in sleeping habits (a lot more or a lot less than usual)	16
39. Major change in number of family get-togethers ("")	15
40. Major change in eating habits (a lot more or less food intake, or very different meal hours or surroundings)	15
41. Vacation	13
42. Major holidays	12
43. Minor violations of the law (traffic tickets, jaywalking, disturbing the peace, etc)	11

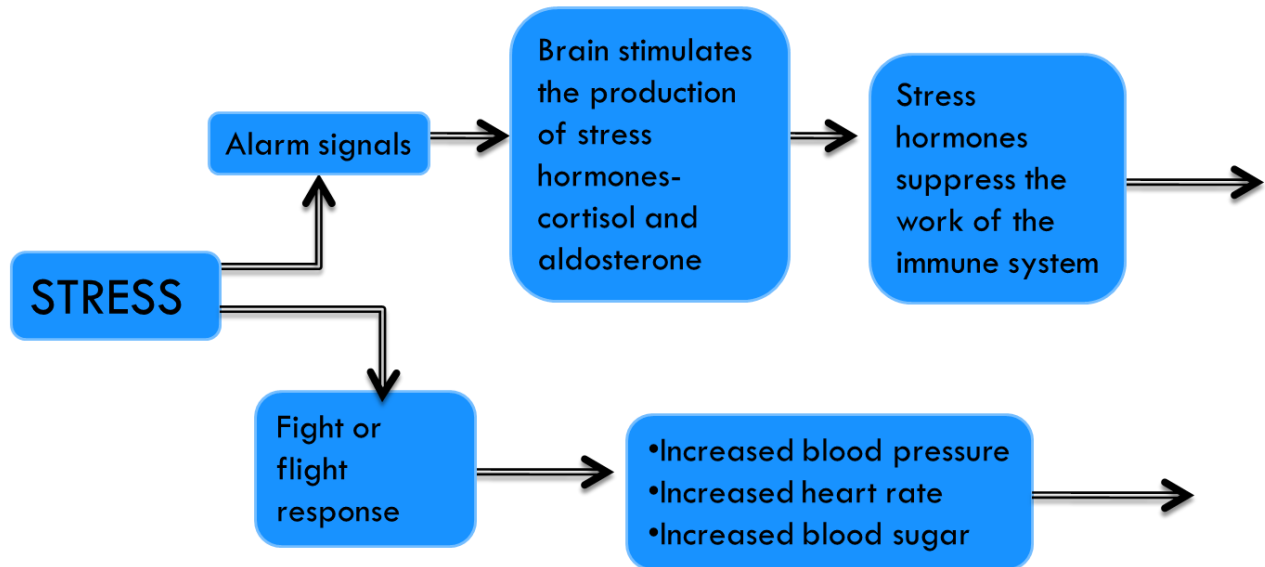
**Now, add up all the points you have to find your score.**

**150pts or less** means a relatively low amount of life change and a low susceptibility to stress-induced health breakdown.

**150 to 300 pts** implies about a 50% chance of a major health breakdown in the next 2 years.

**300pts or more** raises the odds to about 80%, according to the Holmes-Rahe statistical prediction model.

# How stress leads to illness



INCREASED SUSCEPTIBILITY TO DISEASES AND INFECTIONS

**Heart Attack**

Did you know that men and women often experience different symptoms?

<p>upper back or shoulder pain</p> <p>pain that spreads to the arm</p> <p>-unusual fatigue</p> <p>-difficulty sleeping</p>	<p>Chest discomfort</p>	<p>Arm or back discomfort</p>	<p>Neck or jaw discomfort</p>
	<p>trouble breathing, with or without chest discomfort</p>	<p>Feeling light-headed or breaking into a cold sweat</p>	<p>Feeling sick or discomfort in your stomach</p>

# Matters of Your Heart



## RISKS

**56%** of adults have been told by a healthcare professional to improve their health

**83%** believe that heart attacks and stroke can be prevented, but aren't motivated to do anything

**60%** of adults don't know their blood pressure and cholesterol numbers  
**44%** monitor their blood pressure outside of the doctor's office

**99%** of Americans need to improve their heart health

**72%** don't consider themselves at risk for heart disease

**58%** put no effort into improving their heart health

Heart disease is the **#1** leading cause of **death** in the United States

**1 of every 3 deaths** in the United States is caused by heart disease and stroke

Lowering your blood pressure may decrease your risk of stroke and heart disease by about **50%**

Every **25 seconds** an American will have a coronary event



Every **39 seconds** someone dies from heart disease and stroke

Each year, an estimated **785,000** Americans will have their first heart attack

Each year, an estimated **470,000** Americans will have another heart attack

## FACTS

More than **62,000** visits per day on [heart.org](http://heart.org) and [strokeassociation.org](http://strokeassociation.org)

**f 329** Join our Facebook communities every day

Join our conversation every day at [facebook.com/AmericanHeart](https://facebook.com/AmericanHeart)

# The Top 3 Tips For Preventing Heart Disease in Adults

## 1. Exercise Daily

Men and women need to stay active daily. Physical activity and aerobic exercise for at least 30 minutes a day needs to part of your every day routine. This may include exercising at the gym, brisk walking, bicycling, or swimming. Find an exercise activity that you love and do it daily.



## 2. Eat Healthy

Making healthy nutritional choices daily is vital for your health. A diet rich in colorful fruits and vegetables, and water, should be part of a daily heart healthy diet. Everyone should avoid food with excessive fat, sugar, and salt. Also, limit soft drinks and fast food consumption.

## 3. Avoid Tobacco Smoke

Smoking tobacco leads to heart disease. Cigarette smoke narrows and damages the arteries of the body. It is important that you do not smoke or stop smoking. Also, everyone needs to reduce their exposure to second-hand smoke which research shows is associated with coronary artery calcification, a build-up of calcium in the heart's arteries which indicates heart disease.



The information for this infographic has been provided by:  
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