

Answering Your Questions About Heart Disease and Sex

Eduardo Chapunoff

iUniverse (Aug 31, 2004)

Unknown \$21.95 (300pp)

978-0-595-31112-5

Heart attacks are among the most common medical problems, but they also seem to be the most misunderstood and under-discussed disorders. This book addresses the basics of heart disease and how a heart patient can function and even lead a healthy sex life, taking the mystique out of heart disease and answering sex-related questions that a patient might be too embarrassed to ask in person. The book has been designed for psychotherapists, social workers, life partners, and others attempting to grasp the intricacies of these disorders.

Instead of presenting the material in a dry, academic manner, the author offers a readable mix of personal anecdotes, extracts of interviews with married couple patients, illustrations of heart functions, lists of available medications and potential solutions, and Q & As on related subjects, such as cholesterol.

The need for sexual activity is not limited to the young, he emphasizes, and elder patients should explore all possibilities. "Lovemaking is a complex issue," he writes. "Every person has his or her own way of expressing love. Some are more physically inclined. Others are more spiritually oriented."

While heart problems cannot be prevented entirely, certain cardiovascular risk factors can be addressed. Chapunoff devotes an entire chapter to these factors, which range from hypertension to race to diabetes.

He doesn't hold back on the humor, either—not a bad idea, considering the gravity under which some readers might be studying this book. For example, he cites a conversation in which a husband asks his wife: "Sadie, can we have sex again?" She replies, "Yes, Sam, just tell me when, how, and why."

Because older couples often do not graciously accept new limits on sexual activity, the author devotes an entire chapter to erectile dysfunction and some solutions. The cause, he notes, may be emotional or psychological, rather than purely physical. Doctors must be prepared to have their patients consult with specialists.

Having a healthy heart can sometimes simply come down to maintaining a healthy diet, the author notes, especially when the patient is grossly overweight. He is not a proponent of the Atkins diet, with its concentration on meat. "Sprinkling saturated fats into circulatory systems and risking the formation or cracking of atherosclerotic plaques is a frightening prospect," Chapunoff writes. "I do not support this diet, even in people without cardiovascular disease."

The author, who also penned *Sex and the Cardiac Patient* in English and Spanish, has an extensive resume on the study of heart issues. He has a private cardiology practice with the Greater Fort Lauderdale Heart Group and is a diplomat of the American Board of Cardiovascular Disease, among other accomplishments.

With fifty-nine million Americans suffering from cardiovascular diseases and a growing number of people leading more sedentary lives with poorer eating habits, this text has the potential for becoming a well-thumbed reference book.

KARL KUNKEL (August 18, 2009)

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