

USA WEEKEND

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Special Health Report

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Health Briefs: The latest advice on living well

BY SUSAN T. LENNON

HEART ATTACK: Deadlines live up to the name

If you dread deadlines and feel crushed by competition and stress, be aware that working under short-term time constraints can trigger a heart attack. An intense deadline can increase your risk sixfold, especially within the first 24 hours after the deadline, says a study of 1,400 heart attack survivors in Sweden.

Researcher Jette Möller, Ph.D., says the danger mounts even higher if people who routinely toil under driven conditions also have other heart attack risk factors, including high cholesterol, hypertension, diabetes, abdominal obesity and smoking.

On deadline?

John P. Reilly, M.D., a cardiologist at the Ochsner Clinic Foundation in New Orleans, has advice:

- Use stress-reduction techniques such as yoga and meditation. Make cognitive changes — “see the glass as half-full rather than half-empty.”
- If you smoke, quit. Watch your cholesterol and weight, exercise, and eat your fruits and veggies.



LONG HOURS ON THE ROAD POISON YOUR BODY

IF YOU SPEND a lot of time cooped up in your car, speeding up and slowing down in traffic, you may be driving your cardiovascular system crazy. A new study of North Carolina state troopers reports that toxic bits from eroding roads, particles from the wear and tear of car parts, and contaminants from fuel combustion all infiltrate deep into the lungs.

Benzene, carbon monoxide, copper, sulfur, aldehydes, titanium, aluminum, silicon, iron, chromium ... cough, cough. Your tissues become inflamed, your blood may clot more easily, your red blood cells rise, your heart skips beats ... and you're at greater risk of cardiac disease and its complications.

So what's a driver to do?

The study's lead researcher, Michael Riediker, suggests drivers take the following precautions:

■ **Use air particle filters** inside your car cabin, which is good for you, and at the exhaust, which is good for others. FYI, exhaust filters will be required on new heavy-duty trucks in the United States starting in 2006.



■ **Close the windows** and put your air on recycle when in heavy traffic, in a tunnel or near a truck belching black particles.

■ **Avoid rush hour.** Try to minimize time on heavily traveled roads.

■ **Don't tailgate.** You'll get a full load of pollutants from the vehicle in front.

■ **Keep your car well-maintained** and its engine functioning properly.

■ **Consider driving a low-emission car.**

■ **Consult your doctor** if you have a heart problem and are spending lots of time in the car. **W** — Susan T. Lennon