

# Can Stress Lead To Heart Disease? Valley Examines Potential Correlations

John Haffey



Dr. Elliot Brown is a cardiologist with Valley Medical Group. Photo Credit: *Valley Medical Group*

RIDGEWOOD, N.J. -- What if heart disease was as much a result of psychological stress as it was overall health? According to doctors like Dr. Elliot Brown, a cardiologist with Valley Medical Group, research is proving this correlation is stronger than many once thought.

Known as behavioral cardiology, this growing field examines the mind-body connection and the lifestyle behaviors that promote heart disease. "Lifestyle behaviors that promote heart disease include an unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, smoking, emotional factors and chronic stress," said Brown. "Chronic stress can be caused by a lack of social support, low socioeconomic status, work-related stress, marital stress, caregiver strain, loneliness, depression and bereavement." Brown and other doctors are realizing that, in some cases, these psychosocial stressors are just as dangerous as physical factors when it comes to developing heart disease.

"Poor management of stress and high levels of emotion also affect our resilience and our ability to make wise choices when it comes to our health," he said. "This can lead to poor nutritional

choices, which in turn lead to physical problems such as weight gain, sleep apnea, high blood pressure, diabetes, the list goes on."

The good news is that patients have control over their stress. Recognizing and managing psychosocial stressors and making healthy lifestyle choices can improve your overall health. "Put yourself in a position to succeed and share your commitment with others," said Brown. "It's also important to remember that good nutrition is the cornerstone of optimal health." During stressful times, it's important to have a support network as well. That's where The Valley Hospital's integrative program at the [Snyder Center for Comprehensive Atrial Fibrillation](#) comes in.

Patients at [Valley's Snyder Center for Comprehensive Atrial Fibrillation](#) are evaluated by a multidisciplinary team including electrophysiologists, as well as specialists in imaging, cardiology, sleep medicine, nutrition and weight-loss management, diabetes and stress management. The team works together to identify health issues, such as stress, hypertension, sleep apnea and obesity, that are contributing to a patient's heart issues.

Each month The Valley Hospital hosts seminars on behavioral cardiology and its impact on atrial fibrillation. The series, called "Take Control," takes place at the Snyder Center, which is located at One Linwood Avenue, Paramus. To learn more, [click here](#).