

Money Matters and Heart Health

As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, businesses continue to struggle, people are losing their jobs, and the American unemployment rate remains in double digits.

The US unemployment hit 10.2% in July of 2020, more than double than February's rate of 3.5%, before the spread of the pandemic in the US. This means the jobless rate remains above the Global Financial Crisis peak of 10.0%.

For many of these American workers, no steady paycheck means no way to pay bills. And according to a recent study published in the journal *Circulation*, that financial uncertainty could be hard on the heart.

The [study](#) indicates that income volatility more than doubles the risk for cardiovascular diseases, such as heart attacks, strokes, heart failure or death during the following 10 years, compared to a similar group of people with less income fluctuation.

Dr. Sudhir Mungee is an OSF HealthCare Cardiovascular Institute interventional cardiologist. He says the stress of financial insecurity can absolutely be detrimental to heart health.

"We know that stress and heart disease go together. People with a lot of stress don't do well where heart health is concerned, and you have more risk of coronary artery disease, stroke, and hypertension," explained Dr. Mungee.

While the study's researchers followed their subjects for more than a decade, Dr. Mungee says these negative heart health effects don't always take years to present themselves. Sudden stressful events can have an immediate impact on your heart.

"Sudden stress can cause a sudden surge of hormones such as cortisol. And those hormones have a tendency to have deleterious, negative effects on heart health," warned Dr. Mungee.

He says the best thing to do is to avoid stress when possible. Dr. Mungee admits that is easier said than done, but recommends trying to remember that there are events you can't control, and that stressful times normally pass with time.

He suggests learning to practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing, to exercise regularly and to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.

If you are experiencing a higher than normal level of stress and feel like you need help, OSF HealthCare provides a wide range of behavioral health services. To learn more, click [here](#) or call the OSF HealthCare Access Center at (844) 673-2778.