A recent study found that a forager-horticulturalist population of the Bolivian Amazon have the lowest reported levels of vascular aging for any population. For the Tsimane (pronounced chee-MAH-nay) people, coronary atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) is five times less common than for Americans. In fact, an 80-year-old from the Tsimane group had the same vascular age as an American in his or her mid-fifties.

The Tsimane lifestyle is very different from that of contemporary society, but certain elements of it could be applied to help to reduce risk of heart disease: While industrial populations are sedentary for more than half of their waking hours (54%), the Tsimane spend only 10% of their daytime being inactive. Their diet is largely carbohydrate-based (72%) and includes non-processed carbohydrates which are high in fibre such as rice, corn, nuts and fruits. Protein constitutes 14% of their diet and comes from animal meat. The diet is very low in fat with fat comprising only 14% of the diet, or about 38 grams of fat each day with no trans fats. In addition, smoking was rare in the population.

In general, the study suggests that the likelihood of heart attacks and strokes can be diminished by adopting some elements of this lifestyle.

References