

PUMP IT UP

Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death and disability in our world. The modifiable cardiovascular risk factors are smoking, diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, stress and inactivity.

What can we do about it? Exercise!



How much exercise do we need?
It is universally agreed that your heart health improves with just 30 minutes of exercise on most days. Two 15-minute segments of exercise or three 10-minute segments still count as 30 minutes; just make sure your activity is vigorous enough to raise your heart rate. Try the talk/sing test; if you can't talk while you exercise, you are working too hard. If you can sing, you need to work harder.

Physical activity is anything that makes you move your body and burn calories. It includes things like brisk walking, climbing stairs, jogging, swimming and biking.

What happens when we exercise?
Just as exercise strengthens other muscles in your body, it helps your heart muscle become more efficient and better able to pump blood throughout your body. This means the heart pushes out more blood with each beat, allowing it to beat slower and keeping your blood pressure under control.

When you exercise regularly, your body's tissue, including the heart, does a better job of pulling oxygen from your blood.

This allows your heart to work better under stress and keeps you from getting winded during high-intensity activities.

Physical activity also allows better blood flow in the small blood vessels around your heart. Clogs in these arteries can lead to heart attacks. There is also evidence that exercise helps your cardiovascular system make more branches and connections between blood vessels, so there are other routes for your blood to travel if the usual path is blocked.

Exercise also increases your levels of the good cholesterol, HDL, by flushing the artery clogging LDL, known as bad cholesterol, out of your system.

Exercise also indirectly lowers your risk of heart disease by:

-Keeping your weight down, thus reducing your blood pressure, cholesterol and risk of developing diabetes.

-Improving your mood by allowing your brain to release endorphins, thus de-stressing you.

-Giving you more energy.

-Helping you sleep better.

Just do it.
Don't give excuses. Don't be lazy. Take your heart for a walk every day and ask your doctor to help you design an exercise routine that is right for you. Be sure to check with your doctor if you haven't exercised for a long time or if you have a history of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, dizziness or exercise-related pain.

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TAKE YOUR HEART FOR A WALK



The American Heart Association recommends:

For overall cardiovascular health:

- At least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity at least five days per week for a total of 150 minutes per week.

OR

-At least 25 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity at least three days per week for a total of 75 minutes; or a combination of moderate and vigorous aerobic activity.

AND

-Moderate to high – intensity muscle-strengthening activity at least two days per week for additional health benefits.

For lowering blood pressure and cholesterol:

-An average of 40 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity three to four times per week.

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