

Exercise to Improve Heart Health

If you've been sedentary, you're in for a pleasant surprise. Not only will increasing your physical activity significantly reduce your risk for heart disease, you will notice a difference in how you feel, too.

Physical Activity Benefits



- Improves heart and lung function
- Helps you lose weight or maintain a healthy weight
- Improves balance, muscle tone and joint flexibility
- Relieves stress and tension and improves mood
- Reduces risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis and diabetes

Talk to your doctor before beginning a physical activity program if:

- You haven't been active recently
- You have health problems, such as high blood pressure
- You're pregnant
- You're over 60

How Much to Exercise

Most adults should aim to exercise 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week. Even if you exercise in short, 10-minute increments throughout the day – it will still add up to a big benefit. Your exercise plan should include all three types of activity – aerobic exercise, strength training and flexibility training.



Aerobic Exercise

(4-6 times per week):

Aerobic exercise uses large muscles and should cause you to breathe faster and more deeply, increasing the amount of oxygen in your blood and increasing blood flow to muscles and lungs. You want to move vigorously enough to raise your heart rate but not so much that you can't comfortably talk.



Strength Training

(2-3 days per week):

Strength training builds strong muscles and bones. You can use free weights, strength-training machines or your own body weight (pushups and squats, for example).



Flexibility Training

(before and after exercise):

Stretching exercises increase your flexibility by lengthening muscles. Flexibility is critical for balance, especially as we age, and for joint health. It also helps to prevent injury.



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