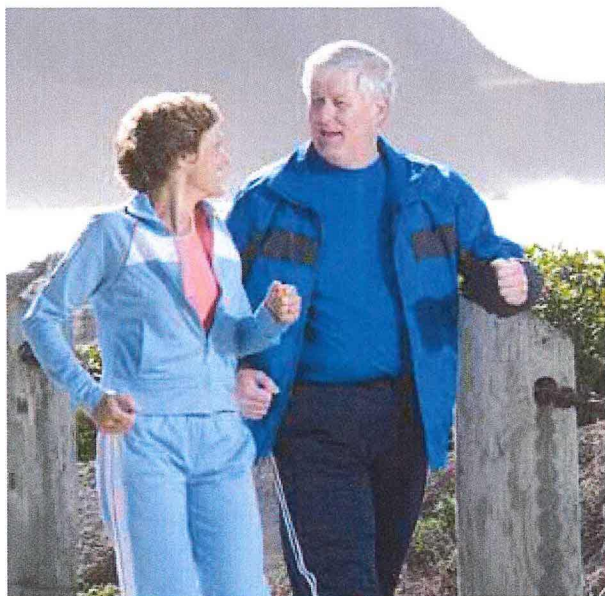




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Exercise for a Healthier Heart



Exercise with a friend. When activity is fun, you're more likely to stick with it.

You may wonder how you can improve the health of your heart. If you're thinking about exercise, you're on the right track. You don't need to become an athlete. But you do need a certain amount of brisk exercise to help strengthen your heart. If you have been diagnosed with a heart condition, your healthcare provider may advise exercise to help stabilize your condition. To help make exercise a habit, choose safe, fun activities.

Before you start

Check with your healthcare provider before starting an exercise program. This is especially important if you have not been active for a while. It's also important if you have a long-term (chronic) health problem such as heart disease, diabetes, or obesity. Or if you are at high risk for having these problems.

Why exercise?

Exercising regularly offers many healthy rewards. It can help you do all of the following:

- Improve your blood cholesterol level to help prevent further heart trouble
- Lower your blood pressure to help prevent a stroke or heart attack
- Control diabetes, or reduce your risk of getting this disease
- Improve your heart and lung function
- Reach and stay at a healthy weight
- Make your muscles stronger so you can stay active
- Prevent falls and fractures by slowing the loss of bone mass (osteoporosis)

- Manage stress better
- Reduce your blood pressure
- Improve your sense of self and your body image

Exercise tips

- **Ease into your routine.** Set small goals. Then build on them. If you are not sure what your activity level should be, talk with your healthcare provider first before starting an exercise routine.
- **Exercise on most days.** Aim for a total of 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) or more of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. Or 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) or more of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity each week. Or try for a combination of both. Moderate activity means that you breathe heavier and your heart rate increases but you can still talk. Think about doing 40 minutes of moderate exercise, 3 to 4 times a week. For best results, activity should last for about 40 minutes to lower blood pressure and cholesterol. It's OK to work up to the 40-minute period over time. Examples of moderate-intensity activity are walking 1 mile in 15 minutes. Or doing 30 to 45 minutes of yard work.
- **Step up your daily activity level.** Along with your exercise program, try being more active the whole day. Walk instead of drive. Or park further away so that you take more steps each day. Do more household tasks or yard work. You may not be able to meet the advised amount of physical activity. But doing some moderate- or vigorous-intensity aerobic activity can help reduce your risk for heart disease. Your healthcare provider can help you figure out what is best for you.
- **Choose 1 or more activities you enjoy.** Walking is one of the easiest things you can do. You can also try swimming, riding a bike, dancing, or taking an exercise class.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you have any of these:

- Chest pain or feel dizzy or lightheaded
- Burning, tightness, pressure, or heaviness in your chest, neck, shoulders, back, or arms
- Abnormal shortness of breath
- More joint or muscle pain
- A very fast or irregular heartbeat (palpitations)

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