



living healthy

NEWSLETTER

Exercise for a Healthy Heart

February is American Heart Month and it's an excellent time for you to take steps to lessen your risk of heart disease. One of the best things you can do is exercise regularly.

BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

Exercise conveys numerous benefits to your heart and cardiovascular system. It lowers buildup of plaques in your arteries by increasing the amount of good cholesterol (high-density lipoprotein or HDL) and lowering amounts of bad cholesterol (low-density lipoprotein or LDL) in your blood. It can also lower your blood pressure and lessen your chance of developing high blood pressure, strengthen your heart's contractions so that it pumps with less effort, and help you control your weight and reduce stress—both risk factors for heart disease.

GETTING STARTED

If you have lived a sedentary lifestyle up to now, don't despair. First, see your doctor who will evaluate your level of physical fitness and help you determine what type of exercise is best for you. This is particularly important for men older than age 40 and women older than age 50. Your doctor will also be able to determine if you are taking any medications or have any conditions that would affect your ability to exercise. A key to a successful exercise program is to start slow and build up gradually. And, pick an exercise or exercises that you enjoy. This will keep you motivated to continue.

HOW OFTEN, HOW MUCH?

Some studies indicate 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise—walking, jogging,



swimming, bicycling, dancing, skating, etc.—three to four times a week is sufficient; others suggest that daily exercise is best. However, most experts agree that "getting off the couch" and doing any amount of exercise is beneficial to your health.

SOME WORDS OF CAUTION

Stop exercising and contact your doctor as soon as possible if you experience any of the following:

- Pain
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Unexplained weight gain or swelling
- Pressure or pain in your chest, neck, arm, jaw or shoulder

Remember, exercise is only a part of a heart-healthy lifestyle. Eating a proper diet, getting enough rest, reducing stress, not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, and regular health screenings are important. Prevention pays!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE REFER TO THE FOLLOWING:

- American Academy of Family Physicians
www.familydoctor.org
- Cleveland Clinic:
www.clevelandclinic.org
- Mayo Clinic
www.mayoclinic.org