

Physical Activity for Heart Health



Regular physical activity can help you manage your weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol. It can also improve your mood and ability to manage stress. In these ways, physical activity adds to your quality of life and decreases the risk of heart attack.

How Much Physical Activity Do I Need?

To improve your heart health, aim for at least **2½ hours of physical activity each week**. That equals 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

What Counts as Physical Activity?

Physical activity includes any movement your body does. Some examples are:

- Gardening and housework
- Walking
- Swimming
- Jogging
- Riding a bike
- Mowing the lawn
- Pilates or yoga
- Playing tennis, soccer, or basketball
- Using an exercise machine, such as an elliptical trainer or rowing machine

Any physical activity can help make your heart healthier, as long as you are doing enough of it!

Which Types of Physical Activity Are the Best?

The best types of physical activity are those you enjoy. When you enjoy your activities, you are more likely to stick with them.

You may want to start by choosing **moderate-intensity** activities. During a moderate-intensity activity, you can talk without gasping for breath, but you can't easily sing without feeling winded.

Tips to Get Started

- **Set realistic goals.** What if you can't fit in 30 minutes of activity at one time? Spread shorter periods of activity throughout the day! For example, you get the same health benefits from three 10-minute bouts of activity that you get from 30 continuous minutes of activity.
- **Build up gradually.** If you have not been active for a while, begin by being active one or two days per week. Each week (or every other week), add another day of activity until you are active at least five days a week.
- **Schedule it.** Make physical activity a planned part of your life. Just as you make other appointments, add some time for activity to your weekly calendar.
- **Try the buddy system.** Having a workout partner may help you to stay on track. Catch up with a friend while walking, rather than meeting for coffee. If possible, ask a coworker to take a "walking meeting" instead of sitting in an office.

