



Fighting Heart Disease and Stroke

Why Should I Exercise?

If your doctor has advised you to begin an exercise program, you should follow that advice. People who don't get enough physical activity are much more likely to develop heart disease and high blood pressure.

Exercise can lower your risk of:

- Heart disease and heart attack
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol

If you haven't been active and want to start exercising, first check with your doctor for a program that's right for you. Once you start, you'll find that exercise isn't just good for your health -- it's also fun!



What else can exercise do for me?

Exercise offers lots of enjoyable and important benefits, including:

- Lessening your chance of heart attack
- Strengthening your heart, lungs, bones and muscles
- Giving you more energy and strength
- helping control your weight and blood pressure
- Helping you handle stress
- Helping you sleep better
- Helping you look good

- Making you feel upbeat
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What kind of exercise should I do?

To help your heart, exercise should be constant and last long enough to increase the blood flow to the muscles. Start slowly and build up as your heart gets stronger. First, discuss exercise with your doctor or nurse. Then try:

- Walking or hiking
 - Jogging
 - Bicycling
 - Swimming
 - Rowing
 - Walking on a treadmill
 - Stair climbing
 - Aerobic dancing
 - Cross-country skiing
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How often should I exercise?

- Work up to 20 to 30 minutes of exercise.
 - Make sure it's regular -- at least 3 times a week.
 - Try to spread it out over the week for best results. An every-other-day schedule works best.
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What else can I do?

In addition to exercise, studies show that easy-to-do daily activities may benefit your heart. Also, making small changes in your lifestyle can make a big overall difference in your health. Here are some examples:

- Take a stroll in the neighborhood.
 - Get into gardening or yard work.
 - Take the stairs instead of escalators and elevators.
 - Park further from the stores and walk through the parking lot.
 - Learn a new dance!
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How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or health care professional. Or call your local American Heart Association at 1-800-242-8721.
 - If you have heart disease, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
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Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your doctor. For example:

What's the best type of exercise for me?

How much should I exercise?
