

STEP IT UP! – REDUCE HEART DISEASE RISK BY EXERCISING

Facts about Heart Disease

Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Heart disease is the **leading cause of death** for both men and women.
- Almost 610,000 Americans die from heart disease every year. This is about **one in every four deaths**.
- In the United States, someone has a heart attack **every 42 seconds**.
- Each year, heart disease costs the United States nearly **\$207 billion**. These costs include health care services, medications, and lost productivity.

Risk Factors

High blood pressure and diabetes are two of the main risk factors for heart disease. Additionally, high LDL-cholesterol, or “bad cholesterol”, increases risk. Lifestyle choices, like the examples listed below, can also contribute to heart disease.

- **Physical inactivity**
- **Obesity**
- Poor diet
- Excessive alcohol use
- Smoking

What are the benefits of exercising?

Regular exercise has favorable effects on those who are at risk for heart disease.

1. **Improvement of medical conditions:** Exercise can reduce weight and blood pressure level. It also lowers “bad cholesterol” while raising “good cholesterol”. “Good cholesterol” is also known as HDL-cholesterol. In diabetic patients, exercise increases the body’s ability to use insulin. Insulin use helps to control blood sugar.
2. **Improvement in bodily functions:** Exercise can improve muscular function and strength. It also has favorable effects on the body’s ability to use oxygen. This can result in decreased fatigue and better performance of daily activities.

3. **Reduction in death rate:** Per the American Heart Association, exercise has been proven to reduce the death rate in those who have had a heart attack by 20-25%.

How much is enough?

The Surgeon General recommends that adults get 150 minutes of moderate exercise every week. Some examples of moderate exercise include brisk walking or bicycling. Children and adolescents should be physically active for at least one hour every day.

How should I start?

If you already have heart disease, it is important to consult a doctor before starting any type of exercise routine. Make sure to also speak to a doctor if you are over 45 years old and have two or more of the risk factors listed below.

- Immediate family member with heart disease before age 55
- Cigarette smoking
- High blood pressure
- Abnormal cholesterol levels
- Diabetes
- Inactive lifestyle
- Obesity

Also try working more physical activities into everyday tasks. The American Heart Association suggests the following tips to stay active:

- Walk or stand during business calls
- Skip the email or call and walk down the hall to talk to a co-worker
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Participate in or start a recreation league at work
- Park far away and walk to your destination
- Walk around the building during breaks
- Walk and walk. Walk around the mall, in the grocery store, etc.

Be creative and get moving!