



2023 WEEK SIX



Exercise and the Heart

When you walk briskly, you probably notice changes in your body right away. Your heart beats a little faster, your breathing rate increases, and you can feel your leg muscles working. You probably have no idea of all the physiological changes happening inside your body when you exercise and some of these benefits are similar to those from common medications.

Exercise, especially in combination with healthy eating, can prevent or improve most of the major risk factors that contribute to heart disease. These include high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, and unhealthy cholesterol levels. Exercise can also help manage mental health issues, like depression and stress, often ignored contributions to cardiovascular problems.

So, what type of exercise is best for heart health? First, it is the one that you will actually do, and anything is better than nothing. Exercise may be the most effective tool for strengthening your heart. Types of exercise that are best include aerobic and muscle strengthening exercises. Stretching may not contribute directly to heart health, but flexibility is important because it helps you perform aerobic and strength exercises better.

Doing these activities will improve circulation, and over time they can reduce your blood pressure and heart rate. Aim for at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity five or more days per week. Strengthening exercises create leaner muscle mass. As you gain muscle, your body burns calories more easily.

Since 1/3 of all deaths in the U.S. each year are linked to heart disease and stroke, it is important that you know your personal risk. Some risk factors you can't change, like your age, family history, and being male. Many, however, can be improved with lifestyle changes. This simple tool can help you determine your personal risk for heart disease:

www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/locations/cannon-falls/services-and-treatments/cardiology/heart-disease-risk-calculator

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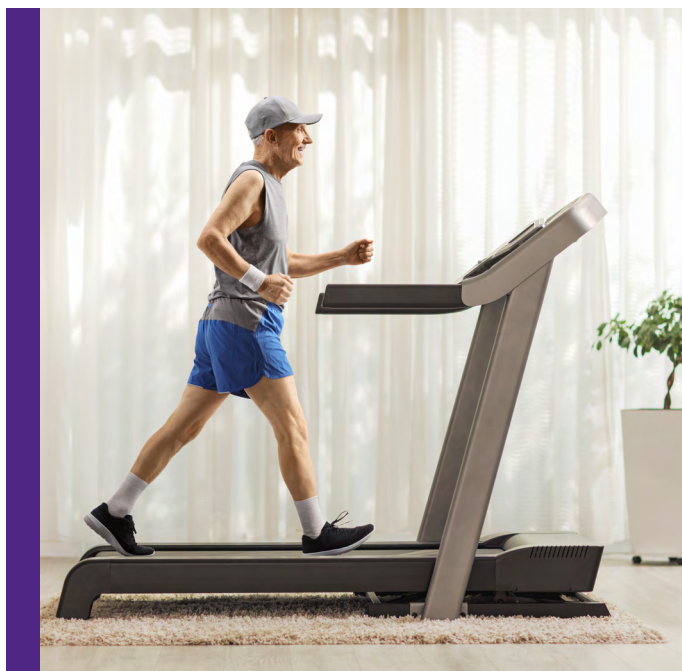
Benefits of HIIT

Adding short bursts of vigorous activity to your activity routine could offer great benefits. For those who feel they don't have enough time to fit in exercise, a routine of high intensity interval training, or HIIT, could be appealing.

While HIIT sounds like a specific training program, it doesn't have to be. Think of what you do right now for physical activity. How can you add intervals, or short exercise "snacks," of vigorous intensity? For example, a HIIT treadmill routine could look something like this: Warm up with slower paced walking for 10 minutes, then alternate with 3 minutes of moderate intensity walking (where you can barely carry on a conversation), and 30 seconds to a minute of vigorous intensity running or speed walking – at least three times, then end with a 5-minute cool down walk.

What are the benefits to adding these high intensity intervals? Research is showing that it improves blood vessel function to aid in managing high blood pressure; promotes better blood sugar regulation; helps reverse muscle decline due to aging; and there is promise that adding these vigorous activity bouts can prolong the lifespan of a healthy brain by delaying the start of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

The biggest take home is that adding these intervals to exercise is easy and there is no mandatory way to do it. You really can move your way! This week add several 30-second bursts of vigorous intensity activity to what you currently do.



DASH for Heart Health

Are you familiar with the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) Diet? Rather than a short-term "diet," DASH is a lifetime eating style that supports overall health and wellness. No foods are off-limits and there are no specific calorie requirements.

The DASH eating style is for everyone in the family. If you follow this plan you can expect to see your blood pressure decrease, along with other health benefits. The plan promotes reducing sugar; eliminating heavily processed, sodium-rich foods; and increasing fruits and vegetables.

The DASH eating plan is easy to follow and includes common foods available in your grocery store. What it doesn't include is highly processed and pre-packaged foods. Avoiding these could be one of the greatest challenges in following the DASH plan.

So, what are processed foods and why eliminate them? Some examples include chips, soda, cookies, hot dogs, lunch meat, cheese slices and spreads, bacon, cereal, canned foods, candy and packaged snacks, and ready-made meals. The American family consumes most of their calories from these types of foods and avoiding them is almost impossible. Reducing the amount of processed food you eat is a good start. These foods typically contain increased amounts of salt, sugar, or fat, and often contain additives or preservatives to improve taste, texture, and to extend shelf-life. An easy way to identify processed food is to look at the label. If you see a laundry list of ingredients that you don't recognize and can't pronounce, it is safe to say it's processed.

Information about the DASH eating plan is easy to find through an online search. Here is a link to get you started: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan. There are many DASH recipes that are tasty and healthful. You will find more recipes here: www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/recipes/dash-diet-recipes/rcs-20077146

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Feel Better in 15 Minutes

Feeling stressed? Keep your toolbox handy with ways you can find your calm when you need it. Here are some things to consider:

Meditation Break – Sit quietly, close your eyes, and focus on your breathing.

Step Outdoors – Take a few minutes to sit in the sunshine, pull some weeds, breath fresh air.

Laugh – Watch a clip of your favorite comedian or call a friend who you can laugh with.

Write it down – Make a list of what is good in your life right now.

Stretch yourself – Gently stretch your neck, shoulders, lower back, thighs, and hips. Stretching lowers stress and sends extra blood to your muscles.

Write a thank you note – Share a few words of appreciation with someone who has helped you.

Take a walk! – Stroll around the neighborhood where you live or work to lift your mood and bust stress. If you are stuck in a rut, your next big idea could be just a walk away as movement can boost creative thinking!

Spiced Oatmeal Pancakes

This recipe showcases whole grains for an important Med-swap!

Makes 8 Servings

Ingredients:

½ cup regular rolled oats

¾ cup white whole wheat flour

1½ teaspoon packed brown sugar

1½ teaspoon baking powder

¼ teaspoon apple pie spice*

Dash salt

1 cup fat-free milk

½ cup refrigerated or frozen egg product, thawed (or 2 egg whites, 1 egg yolk)

2 tablespoons canola oil

Sugar-free maple-flavored syrup or honey, optional

Sautéed Apples

2 tart cooking apples, cored and sliced

2 teaspoons canola oil

¼ teaspoon apple pie spice

*Apple pie spice: Combine 1 tablespoon cinnamon, 1½ teaspoons ground nutmeg, ¾ teaspoon ground allspice, and ¾ teaspoon ground cardamom.

Nutrition Information per serving (3 pancakes, 1/8 of apples):
140 calories; 5 g total fat (0 g saturated fat, 0 g trans-fat); 20 g carbohydrates; 5 g protein; 2 g fiber; 180 mg sodium; 7 g sugar.

Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Rinse apples under cold running water.
3. Place rolled oats in a blender or food processor. Cover and blend/process until very fine, resembling flour. In a large bowl, combine ground oats, white whole wheat flour, brown sugar, baking powder, apple pie spice, and salt.
4. In a medium bowl, combine milk, egg, and oil. Add milk mixture to flour mixture and whisk just until combine. (Mixture should be lumpy.)
5. Prepare apples just before you start to cook pancakes. In a large skillet, cook apples in hot oil over medium-high heat until apples are golden brown. Sprinkle with apple pie spice.
6. For each pancake, pour about 1 tablespoon of the batter onto a hot, lightly greased griddle or heavy skillet. Cook over medium heat for 1 to 2 minutes on each side or until pancakes are golden brown, turning to second side when pancakes have bubbly surfaces and edges are slightly dry. Serve warm with sautéed apples and maple syrup or honey, if desired.

