

February is Heart Month

28 Days Towards a Healthy Heart

Try one of these tips each day for a month, then keep up the momentum and make your favorites part of your regular routine.

#ourhearts
are healthier together

Day 1

Grab a friend and join the #OurHearts movement.



Day 2

Make a heart healthy snack with a friend or your family.

Day 3

Schedule your annual physical. Ask your doctor for your heart health goals.



Day 4

Squat it out. Do 1 minute of squats.

Day 5

Visit Smokefree.gov to take the first step to quitting smoking.



Day 6

Make today a salt-free day. Use herbs for flavor instead of salt.



Day 7

Sport red today for National Wear Red Day.



Day 8

Get your blood pressure checked.



Day 9

Walk an extra 15 minutes today.



Day 10

Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity today.



Day 11

Plan your menu for the week with [heart healthy recipes](#).



Day 12

Reduce stress using relaxation techniques.



Day 13

Give the elevator a day off and take the stairs.



Day 14

Protect your sweetheart's heart: Plan a heart healthy date.

Day 15

Swap the sweets for a piece of fruit for dessert.



Day 16

Stress less. Practice mindful meditation for 10 minutes.

Day 17

Head to bed with enough time to get a full 8 hours of sleep.



Day 18

Add a stretch break to your calendar to increase your flexibility.



Day 19

Eat vegetarian for a day.



Day 20

Share a funny video or joke that makes you laugh.

Day 21

Dance for 15 minutes to your favorite music.



Day 22

Call a relative and ask about your family health history.



Day 23

March in place during commercial breaks to get your heart going.



Day 24

Get a tape measure and find out the size of your waist.

Day 25

Phone a friend or neighbor and go for a walk.



Day 26

Fill half of your lunch and dinner plates with vegetables.



Day 27

See how many push-ups you can do in 1 minute.

Day 28

Pay it forward and tell a friend about *The Heart Truth*.



nhlbi.nih.gov/heartmonth



NIH National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute



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Benefits of a Healthy Heart and Aerobic Exercise

- Regular exercise will lower your resting heart rate. Aerobic exercise increases the size of the heart's chambers allowing it to pump more blood volume on each beat! The net effect is you won't have to work as hard to do the basic activities of daily living. Plus, you'll have a greater reserve capacity to do more strenuous tasks like yard work, or recreational sports.
- You'll feel better and enjoy a higher quality of life. Studies have consistently shown that one's mental health improves with exercise. There is an increase in the happiness hormones: primarily endorphin, serotonin and dopamine
- Increased gray matter – more, healthier neurons and neural connections are stimulated by exercise, particularly cardiovascular exercise. You'll be lowering your risk of Alzheimer's and other diseases associated with aging and inactivity.
- Increase capillarization will greatly lower your risk of heart attacks or strokes.
- Lower resting blood pressure
- Improved bone density, lower risk of osteoporosis.



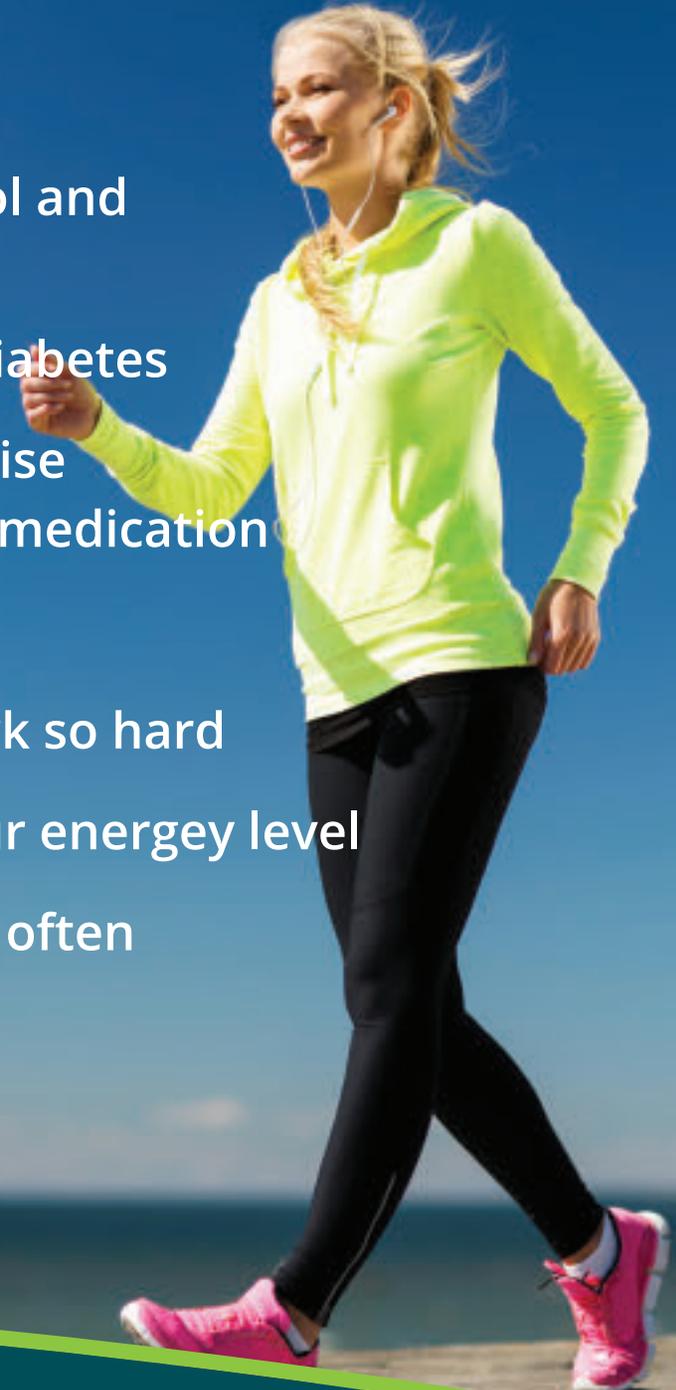
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Top 10 Benefits of Aerobic Exercise

1. Helps you to lose weight by expending calories
2. Lowers blood pressure and improves your cholesterol and triglyceride levels
3. Improves your insulin sensitivity and reduces risk of diabetes
4. Heightens your mood by releasing endorphins; exercise is as effective in treating depression as antidepressant medication
5. Reduces your risk of heart attack, stroke, and cancer
6. Strengthens your heart so that it doesn't have to work so hard
7. Increases your stamina and, over time, increases your energy level
8. Boosts your immune system so that you get sick less often
9. Keeps your mind sharp
10. Prolongs your life



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Caring for your wonderful heart:

The heart beats over 3 billion times in an average lifetime. It's always working, so the only way you can let the heart rest is by taking good care of it. Consider the following ways to "rest" your heart.

- 1) Meditation
- 2) Yoga; specifically inversion postures.
- 3) Long deep breathing: Sit up straight in a chair or cross-legged on the floor. Long Deep Breathing uses the full capacity of the lungs by utilizing the three chambers of the lungs: abdominal or lower, chest or middle, clavicular or upper. Begin the inhale with an Abdominal Breath. Then add the Chest Breath and finish with a Clavicular Breath. All three are done in a smooth motion. Start the exhale by relaxing the clavicle, then slowly emptying the chest. Finally, pull in the abdomen to force out any remaining air. Breathe through the nose. Continue for 26 breaths, or 3 – 31 minutes.
- 4) Walking in nature.
- 5) Think positive thoughts. Thoughts can affect your physical body in a positive or a negative way. Think supportive thoughts and give yourself credit for all the good that you're doing for yourself and others. Your heart will be happier for it.

Here is a link to a wonderful meditation to relax the heart and mind called Meditation for a Calm Heart:

www.3ho.org/kundalini-yoga/pranayam/pranayam-techniques/meditation-calm-heart



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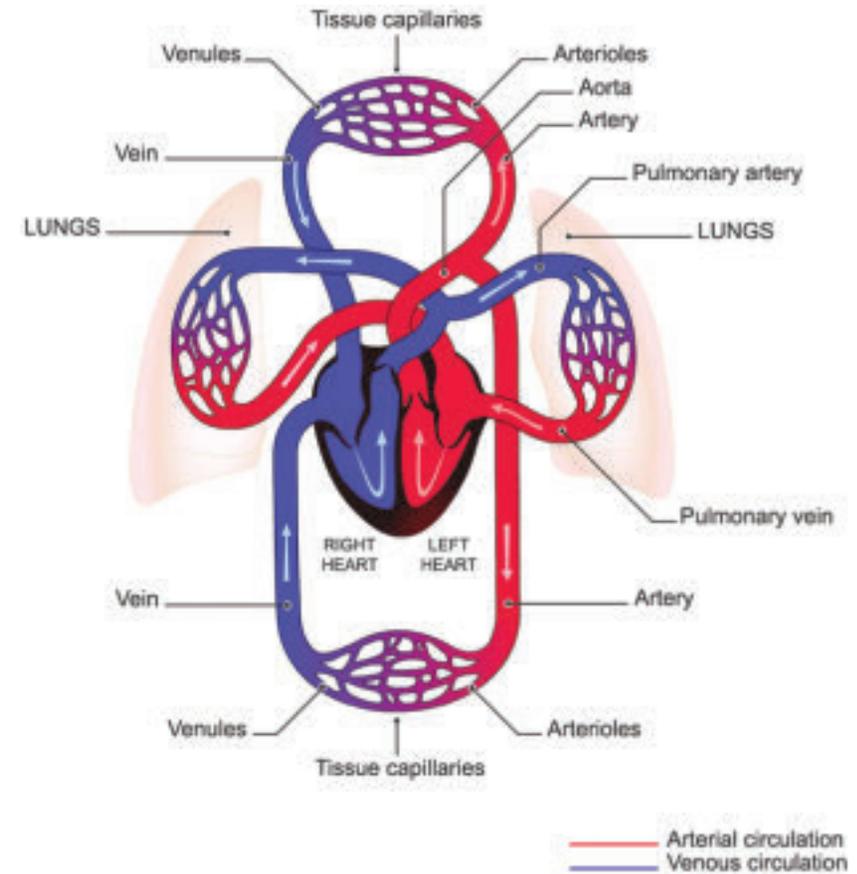
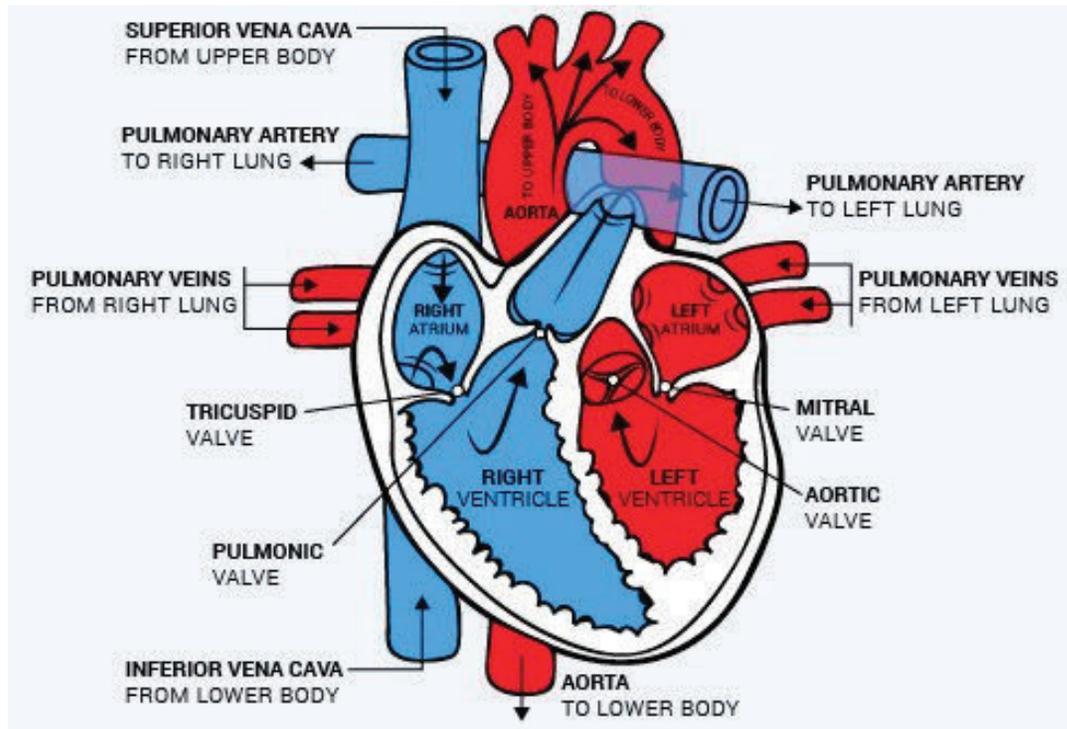
Heart Healthy Foods

1. Eat **FISH** high in omega-3s, such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring and trout.
2. A handful of healthy **NUTS** such as almonds or walnuts will satisfy your hunger and help your heart.
3. **BERRIES** are chock full of heart-healthy phytonutrients and soluble fiber. Try blueberries, strawberries, blackberries or raspberries in cereal or yogurt.
4. **SEEDS**. Flaxseeds contain omega-3 fatty acids, fiber and phytoestrogens to boost heart health. Take them in ground or milled form to reap the greatest benefit. Chia seeds also provide omega 3, fiber and protein and can be eaten whole.
5. **OATS** are the comfort-food nutrient powerhouse. Try toasting oats to top yogurt, salads or to add into a trail mix if you are not a fan of them cooked.
6. **LEGUMES**. Dried beans and lentils such as garbanzo, pinto, kidney or black beans, are high in fiber, B-vitamins, minerals and other good stuff. Veggie chili, anyone?
7. **SOY**. Add edmame beans or marinated tofu in a stir-fry with fresh veggies for a heart-healthy lunch or dinner.
8. **RED, YELLOW & ORANGE VEGGIES** such as carrots, sweet potatoes, red peppers, tomatoes and acorn squash are packed with carotenoids, fiber and vitamins to help your heart.
9. **GREEN VEGGIES**. Popeye was right spinach packs a punch! So does kale, Swiss chard, collard/mustard greens and bok choy. Use these sandwiches and salads instead of lettuce. Broccoli and asparagus are filled with mighty nutrients such as vitamins C and E, potassium, folate, calcium and fiber.
10. **FRUITS** such as oranges, cantaloupes and papaya are rich in beta-carotene, potassium, magnesium and fiber.
11. **DARK CHOCOLATE** is good for your heart health. The higher the percentage of cocoa the better! (The fiber and protein increase with higher cocoa and the sugar decreases). If you are a fan of milk chocolate. start with at least 70% cocoa.



How many times does the heart beat in a year?

At an average rate of 80 times a minute, the heart beats about 115,000 times in one day or 42 million times in a year. During an average lifetime, the human heart will beat more than 3 billion times -- pumping an amount of blood that equals about 1 million barrels.



Warning Signs of a Heart Attack

- 1) Chest discomfort: pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain, burning or heaviness
- 2) Shortness of breath
- 3) Upper body pain or discomfort in the neck, jaw, shoulder, arms & back
- 4) Profuse sweating
- 5) Nausea
- 6) Light-headedness

Signs can vary and may be different for men and women.
If you experience any of these signs, call 9-1-1 immediately.

info from: www.heartandstroke.ca/heart/emergency-signs



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