



Exercise for a Healthy Heart

Get moving

Do you want to reduce your risk for heart disease? High blood pressure? Unhealthy cholesterol levels? Diabetes? Believe it or not, there is one thing that can help you do all of this and it doesn't come in a bottle. It's regular physical activity.

Regular physical activity gets your body working in the way it was designed to work. Fortunately, becoming physically active doesn't mean running a marathon or even joining a gym. As little as 30 minutes a day of moderate to intense activity on most, but, preferably, all days helps protect you from heart disease. Even spending this time on everyday activities like working around the yard or house, walking up stairs, or playing with a child will reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke and help you maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Regular physical activity also helps women increase muscle strength and tone, endurance and energy, control weight and appetite, and relieve stress and anxiety. Adding physical activity that strengthens bones and promotes coordination and balance can also prevent bone loss and debilitating falls later in life.

Three kinds of fitness

Understanding the differences among the three different kinds of fitness will help you set your goals. Reaching a balance among the three is important because they affect each other, and each contributes to total fitness.

- *Conditioning your heart and lungs (aerobic fitness).* Aerobic means "with oxygen." The purpose of aerobic conditioning is to increase the amount of oxygen that is delivered to your muscles, which allows them to work longer. Any activity that raises your heart rate and keeps it up for an extended period of time will improve your aerobic conditioning.
- *Muscle strengthening.* Stronger muscles can mean either more powerful muscles that can do bigger jobs (such as lifting heavier weights) or muscles that will work longer before becoming exhausted (endurance). Weight training or simple exercises such as push-ups are two examples of ways to focus on muscle strengthening.
- *Flexibility.* Like aerobic fitness and muscle strengthening, flexibility is a result of physical activity and results from stretching. Your muscles are repeatedly shortened when they are used, so they need to be slowly and regularly stretched to counteract the repeated shortening that happens through other activities.

Silver Cross Hospital offers a variety of fitness and exercise programs. Visit www.silvercross.org or call 1-888-660-HEAL (4325) for details.



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Keys to success

Staying motivated is central to maintaining your new lifestyle. What it takes to stay motivated may be different from what it takes to become motivated in the first place. Here are some options to try when your interest in being active starts to fade.

- **Vary the activity.** At any fitness level, there are many activities you can try to vary your aerobic, muscle strengthening, or flexibility programs. Bored with walking? Try swimming or an aerobics class. Bored with muscle strengthening exercises? Try doing more gardening (regularly) instead.
- **Vary the time or place.** Try a new route for walking or biking, or even a different room for your exercises or stretching. By knowing lots of routes, you can pick one that suits your mood or schedule.
- **Keep it fun.** If you look at physical activity as a chore or duty, it can become something you will avoid if you get the chance. Create goals for yourself like climbing a hill, playing a sport, or skiing.

Make it a habit

Until physical activity becomes a habit for you, the effort to remain active may seem too great to keep up for a lifetime. Here are some suggestions:

- **Do some physical activity regularly for at least three months.** Experts say that it takes about three months of repetition to form a habit. For some people, 3 months is not long enough to form the habit. Changing seasons and weather may interfere with establishing a habit. Keep it up until you don't think about it as an extra part of your day.
- When you first start an exercise program, **try to exercise at the same time every day.** You can vary the time and place later, but creating a habit requires repetition.
- **Consider your physical activity efforts a scheduled part of your day.** Block it out on your calendars or day planner. Plan several months in advance if you can!

Take care. Take charge. Take heart.

Heart disease is the #1 killer of women. It is a greater threat than all cancers combined. Since 1984, more women than men have died each year of heart disease.

Silver Cross Hospital's Women's HeartAdvantage™ Program is committed to helping women with heart disease. But while there is much a hospital, its physicians and nurses can do, we can make an even greater difference together with you. Take care of yourself. Know what your risk is. Know what your heart health indicators are. And then take charge. Choose to quit smoking, to eat better, to exercise more, and to improve your health. Because women of America, this is your life. We hope you'll put your heart into it.

For more information on Silver Cross Hospital's Women's HeartAdvantage™ Program or a referral to a Women's HeartAdvantage™ certified physician, call 1-888-660-HEAL (4325) or visit www.silvercross.org.



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