



BalanceHealthSM

Newsletter

February 2015 | Written by the wellness experts at eni



Get Moving for Heart Health

There are many variables and factors that affect heart health such as age, heredity, weight, blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as what you eat and how often you exercise. Today, in honor of American Heart Month, let's focus on a factor you can control – exercise.

Exercising regularly helps protect your heart in so many ways!

Your Vitals

Exercise can help control high blood pressure, which is a risk factor for heart disease, and can keep it from rising with age. In fact, the Mayo Clinic reports that "becoming more active can lower your systolic blood pressure — the top number in a blood pressure reading — by an average of 4 to 9 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg). That's as good as some blood pressure medications."

Research also suggests that exercise can help lower cholesterol, which is important for heart health. WebMD reports that there are several mechanisms involved in this process.

"First, exercise stimulates enzymes that help move LDL from the blood (and blood-vessel walls) to the liver. From there, the cholesterol is converted into bile (for digestion) or excreted. So the more you exercise, the more LDL your body expels."

Finally exercise has a positive effect on Type 2 diabetes, which is also a risk factor for heart disease. Exercise helps your body use insulin, which controls your blood sugar. The American Diabetes Association notes that there are a few ways that exercise lowers blood glucose, "Insulin sensitivity is increased, so your cells are better able to use any available insulin to take up glucose during and after activity. When your muscles contract during activity, it stimulates another mechanism that is completely separate of insulin. This mechanism allows your cells to take up glucose and use it for energy whether insulin is available or not. This is how exercise can help lower blood glucose in the short term. And when you are active on

For more information or advice about heart health, contact your Wellness Coordinator by calling:

1.800.327.2255

eni's BalanceHealth program is a confidential service provided by your employer to help you achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle.





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a regular basis, it can also lower your A1C."

Your Weight

Obesity is a major risk factor for heart disease. Obviously exercise helps you maintain a healthy weight and if you are overweight it is a very important factor in losing weight. The key to weight loss is burning more calories than you consume. Fitting in exercise is especially important as many of us lead very sedentary lifestyles due to sitting at a desk all day and then relaxing in front of the TV or computer in the evenings.

Working that Muscle

Your heart is a muscle. Just like every other muscle in the body, to remain strong, it needs to be worked out. The good news is that any exercise that gets your heart pumping acts as a workout. There are so many options including fitness classes, running, swimming, boxing, ice skating, using a stepper or elliptical machine, playing basketball, tennis, volleyball, or flag football, chasing your kids around the backyard, interval weight training, hula hooping, and even brisk walking. The possibilities really are endless and your heart healthy workout can be completely tailored toward your activity preferences. The important thing is to get up and move!

AHA Recommendation

Now let's take a look at the American Heart Association's guidelines for ex-

ercise. For overall health benefits to the heart, lungs and circulation, perform any moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic activity using the following guidelines:

For most healthy people, get the equivalent of at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) per week of moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking.

If you need to lower your blood pressure or cholesterol, aim for 40 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity 3 to 4 times per week.

You can incorporate your weekly physical activity with 30 minutes a day on at least 5 days a week.

Physical activity should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes, and preferably, it should be spread throughout the week.

Include flexibility and stretching exercises.

Include muscle strengthening activity at least 2 days each week.

Remember that eni's Wellness Coaches are available if you would like assistance creating a heart healthy exercise or nutrition plan.

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