

February is Heart Healthy Month!

Get regular cardiovascular or aerobic exercise

What is the best exercise for your heart?

It's called 'cardio' for a reason. Cardiovascular exercise is any exercise that helps strengthen your cardiovascular system.. Cardio is the rhythmic or repetitive motion of large muscle groups—think running, walking, biking, swimming or any number of in-place machines like treadmills or ellipticals.

Effective cardiovascular exercise increases oxygen circulation requirements in your muscles. That's why the term cardiovascular exercise and aerobic exercise (exercise that requires more oxygen circulation) are used pretty much interchangeably. **So what happens during aerobic exercise?**

You will...

1. Breathe faster. Fast, deep breaths maximize the amount of new oxygen in your blood.
2. Increase your heart rate. With every beat, your heart circulates more oxygen rich blood to your muscles.
3. Widen your capillaries. Small blood vessels expand to rid muscles of carbon dioxide and lactic acid.

Bonus: during cardio, your body releases endorphins—natural compounds that make you feel good.

People who get regular cardio will be feeling those happy endorphins for longer than most. "People who jog, bike or swim are usually in better health than your standard couch-potato," she said. "That's because cardio/aerobic exercise positively affects a wide variety of health factors."

Those who exercise regularly and live a more active life are more likely to be able to maintain healthy blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol as well as weight. All of these things have a direct impact on your heart. So it's important to develop an exercise plan to maintain a healthy heart.

Physical activity is anything that gets your body moving. Each week adults need 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity and 2 days of muscle strengthening activity.

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Some Activity is Better than None

We know 150 minutes of physical activity each week sounds like a lot, but you don't have to do it all at once. It could be 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. You can spread your activity out during the week and break it up into smaller chunks of time.