

Health & Wellness

How Exercise Benefits Your Heart

Improved health is a primary motivator among people who routinely exercise. Exercise can help people feel better about themselves and their appearance, and it has considerable effects on various parts of the body, including the heart.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading killer of both men and women in the United States. Exercise can be one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk for cardiovascular issues like heart attack, high cholesterol and more. In fact, cardi-

ologists at the New England Baptist Hospital say exercise is not only a risk preventative, but also a healing balm of sorts for heart health.

Exercise can help the heart become more efficient and more capable of pumping blood throughout the body, says the health experts behind Kaiser Permanente health plans. Even light to moderate exercise can be highly effective at improving heart health.

Harvard Medical School says exercise also promotes positive physiological changes, such as encouraging the heart's arteries to dilate more readily. Exercise also can help with the body's sympathetic nervous system (which controls heart rate and blood pressure) to be less reactive.

Ischemic preconditioning is another way that exercise can potentially benefit the heart.

According to a 2017 article in JAMA Cardiology, heart disease patients who exercised found that exercise could trigger short periods of ischemia or reduced blood flow to the heart. After resting for a few minutes, these people saw improved performance when they renewed exercise and got their heart rates up. It is believed that small doses of IPC can help the heart adapt more readily with ischemia

and avoid a major response issue down the road. Those at the Cardiovascular Performance Program at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital found that IPC could reduce damage from heart attack by as much as 50 percent.

Physical activity also allows better blood flow in the small blood vessels around the heart, potentially preventing clogs that can lead to heart attacks. Furthermore, there is some evidence that exercise can help the body grow more blood vessel branches so there are additional routes blood can take if a usual path is blocked by fatty deposits or narrow arteries. Johns Hopkins Medical Center says exercise also works like a beta-blocker medication that can slow the heart rate naturally to alleviate hypertension. It also can raise levels of HDL, the good cholesterol in the body, helping to improve overall cholesterol levels.

There are several reasons why exercise is important to heart health. It's never too late to get with a fitness regimen to prevent or reverse cardiac episodes.

Chiropractors Can Help With Various Ailments

Anyone who has experienced pain understands that it can be debilitating. Pain can make it challenging to manage everyday tasks and can affect relationships and physical and mental health in many ways. Pain medications were once the norm, but with the rise of the opioid epidemic, it may be wise to take a different approach to pain treatment.

Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Continued on



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What To Do About Wellness After 50

Reaching one's fiftieth birthday in optimal health is an accomplishment to be proud of. The hard work required to be healthy in midlife includes adhering to a nutritious diet and exercising regularly. Once individuals cross the threshold and enter their 50s, they can look to some additional strategies to maintain their physical and mental well-being for decades to come.

- **Get a pet.** Many people 50 and older qualify as "empty nesters," a term applied to adults whose children have grown up and moved out of their homes. Some empty nesters experience a phenomenon known as "empty nest syndrome," which the Mayo Clinic notes can be marked by feelings of sadness or loss. Pets can help people over 50 with no children at home overcome feelings linked to empty nest syndrome. In 2018, the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging found that 86 percent of pet owners felt their pets make them feel loved while 73 percent said their pets provided a sense of purpose. Pets also can ensure individuals over 50 stay physically active and provide opportunities to connect with other people.
- **Prioritize learning.** Whether it's taking music lessons, going back to school or mastering a new hobby, learning has a profound effect on aging brains. For example, a 2013 study published in the journal Psychological Science found that memory function is improved by engagement in demanding everyday tasks. That study reported that people who learned new skills experienced greater memory improvement than people who only socialized or participated in activities that were not as cognitively engaging.
- **Make an effort to improve balance.** Various factors contribute to a decline in balance as adults age. For example, a decline in muscle mass that begins when people are in their 30s is a normal part of aging. Over time, that natural decline affects strength and agility. Balance exercises can be a valuable component of a fitness regimen that help individuals reduce their risk for falling as they advance through their 50s and into their 60s and 70s. That's a significant benefit, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that one out of every three adults age 65 and older experiences a fall each year and as many as 30 percent of those falls lead to serious injury.
- **Embrace your inner socialite.** Socialization is important for people of all ages, including individuals 50 and over. A 2017 study from researchers at Michigan State found that valuing friendships was a strong predictor of health and happiness among older adults. Opportunities to socialize with friends may increase as people navigate their 50s and children move out or become more independent. Individuals can take advantage of opportunities to socialize whenever possible.

Various strategies can help people maintain mental and physical wellness as they make their way through their 50s and beyond.

Chiropractors Can Help With Various Ailments

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and the United States Department of Health and Human Services reveal that as many as one in five people received prescription opioids long-term for noncancer pain in primary care settings in 2016. While opioid use for pain does not always lead to abuse of these medications, opioid addiction has become a widespread problem across North America. These same agencies report that approximately 1,000 people are treated in emergency departments in the United States each day for misuse of prescription opioids. Between 2016 and 2017, opioid poisoning hospitalization rates went up by 8 percent in Canada, resulting in an average of 17 hospitalizations each day.

Chiropractic care may be one avenue to pursue as a viable alternative to pain medications. While chiropractic manipulations are most often associated with back and neck pain, there are many different benefits, some of which may surprise those unfamiliar with chiropractic care, for this type of care.

- **Migraines and headaches:** Research shows that spinal manipulation can be an effective way to treat migraines, tension headaches and headaches that begin in the neck. In clinical trials conducted at Macquarie University, 72 percent of migraine sufferers had noticeable or substantial improvement after a period of chiropractic treatment.
 - **Accident injuries:** Chiropractors can assess musculoskeletal anomalies caused by motor vehicle accidents as well as slips and falls. Whiplash is a common issue in car crashes, and this may be addressed by a chiropractor.
 - **Anxiety and stress:** The fight or flight mechanism that is activated when a person experiences stress and anxiety can take its toll on various parts of the body. Because stress involves nerve impulses, chiropractors may be able to work primarily with the spine where these impulses originate to help release tension and nerve irritation. In addition, adjustments can improve blood circulation, which may help signal the brain to turn off its "rally to action" response to stressful situations.
 - **Fibromyalgia:** Fibromyalgia is marked by widespread musculoskeletal pain in the joints, muscles, tendons and other soft tissues. It can be combined with temporomandibular joint syndrome, or TMJ, as well as irritable bowel syndrome, among other illnesses. Chiropractors can remove subluxations, which are misalignments of the vertebrae in the spine and joints that lead to pain responses. A Florida State University study found that those with fibromyalgia who combined resistance training with chiropractic treatment two times a week saw improvements in their symptoms.
- Chiropractic care may be an asset for pain management, as well as a way to improve overall health.



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Dos and Don'ts of Healthy Weight Loss

Maintaining a healthy weight promotes long-term health. Being overweight or obese are risk factors for various conditions, including type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The World Health Organization reports that the worldwide obesity rate has tripled since 1975. In 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults were overweight. Of these, more than 650 million were obese. Health issues related to obesity are largely preventable. Losing weight in a healthy manner is essential for safe and lasting results. Individuals aspiring to lose weight can follow these guidelines on what to do and what not to do.

DO add lean protein sources to your diet. Healthline indicates the body burns calories when digesting and metabolizing protein, so a high-protein diet can help to shed up to 80 to 100 calories per day. Protein also helps you to feel full, reducing the propensity to overeat.

DON'T get hung up on numbers early on. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises that even modest weight loss of 5 to 10 percent of your total body weight is bound to produce health benefits, such as improvements in blood sugar levels, cholesterol and blood pressure. Start small and gradually build up.

DO eat at least four servings of vegetables and three servings of fruits daily. Produce contains an abundance of vital nutrients and is often fiber-rich and low in calories, which helps you to feel full.

DON'T overlook the impact of beverages on weight loss. The calories in sugary beverages, including some all-natural fruit juices, can add up quickly. Stick to water, tea or other unsweetened beverages to help with weight loss.

DO get moving more. The Mayo Clinic notes that while it is possible to lose weight without exercise, getting moving can help burn off the excess calories you can't cut through with diet alone. Exercise boosts metabolism and benefits mood and strengthens muscles and the cardiovascular system as well.

DON'T go shopping while hungry. If you do, you may make impulse buys that compromise healthy eating plans.

DO speak with a doctor if you are vetting diet and exercise plans. A healthcare professional can assist you by indicating if a particular diet or fitness routine is acceptable for your age, goals and current health status.

DON'T forget to track eating. Most healthy diets involve some sort of calorie-counting, whether they actually require you to document your intake or use a formula to attribute "points" or another measure related to what you eat. Writing or tracking the foods and beverages you consume will provide the most honest assessment of habits that could affect weight loss.

DO include foods you enjoy. Completely restricting access to occasional treats may cause you to resent healthy eating, which can derail weight loss goals. The principle of moderation can apply to healthy weight loss as long as you account for the more calorie-dense foods.

Losing weight in a healthy manner is achievable when you seek guidance and follow some time-tested techniques.

THE BASICS OF MEDITATION

Taking steps to safeguard mental health is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. The National Institute of Mental Health notes that mental health affects how individuals think and feel, the choices they make, and how they relate to others, which underscores just how important it is to prioritize mental health.

Meditation is a popular practice with a history so lengthy it may surprise even its most devoted practitioners. According to Psychology Today, some archaeologists trace the origins of meditation all the way back to 5,000 BCE. The global spread of the practice is believed to have started around the fifth or sixth century BCD, when trading along Eurasia's famed Silk Road exposed the practice to various cultures.

The lengthy history of meditation is proof that the practice is no mere fad. In fact, people from all walks of life have much to gain from meditation. Novices can start their meditation journeys with this basic rundown of a practice that has inspired devotees for thousands of years.

What is meditation?

The Mayo Clinic notes that meditation is considered a type of mind-body complementary medicine that intends to produce a tranquil, relaxed state of mind. When practicing meditation, individuals focus their attention and aspire to remove potentially stress-inducing, jumbled thoughts from their mind.

Are there different types of meditation?

The Mayo Clinic reports that there are various ways to meditate. Guided meditation is a popular form of the practice in which individuals form mental images of places or situations they find relaxing. Guided meditation practitioners employ their senses of smell, sight, sound, and touch during a session, which may be led by a guide or teacher.

Mantra meditation is another form of the practice in which individuals silently repeat a calming word, thought or phrase. The repetition is designed to block out distractions.

Mindfulness meditation is a popular form of the practice that emphasizes awareness, or mindfulness and acceptance of living in the moment. The Mayo Clinic notes that individuals practicing mindfulness meditation will focus on what they experience during meditation, such as the flow of their breath, as they attempt to observe their thoughts and emotions.

How do I meditate?

Mindful Communications, which offers corporate training, practical advice and other insights regarding mindfulness and meditation, notes that meditation is both simpler and more complex than most people think. But the following seven-step prospectus can serve as a useful foundation for meditation novices.


1. Take a seat. Individuals are urged to find a calm, quiet place to sit.
2. Set a time limit. A short session between five and 10 minutes can help novices.
3. Notice your body. Individuals should be stable and sit in a position they can maintain for a while.
4. Feel your breath. As you breath in and out, make an effort to feel the sensation of your breath.

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Important Reasons To Visit A Primary Care Physician

It is vital to make personal health a priority. Despite that widely accepted truth, far too often people delay trips to see their doctors. The coronavirus pandemic only compounded this issue. An April 2020 report from Modern Healthcare found roughly one in three Americans delayed medical care as they coped with the financial loss and stress caused by COVID-19. A report from CTV indicated Canadian cancer diagnoses were down 16 percent from 2018 to 2020 due to closed facilities or fear of getting COVID-19 from medical offices.

Concerns about the pandemic are not the only reasons individuals may skip doctor visits. Some avoid going to the doctor due to fear of the unknown. Dr. Barbara Cox, a psychologist based in San Diego, told NBC News that it's common to feel reticent and anxious about going to the doctor. Around 3 percent of the population actually suffers from iatrophobia, the medical name for fear of doctors. Most just worry about getting bad news.



A refresher course on the benefits of visiting a primary care doctor may compel millions to schedule appointments and get back on top of their overall health.

- **Chronic disease management:** An individual with a chronic disease, such as kidney disease, diabetes or hypertension, should consult with a doctor about the ideal frequency of visits and to coordinate medication and testing with specialists.
- **Vaccines and shots:** Primary care providers (PCPs) offer routine vaccinations and can ensure that individuals are up-to-date on the immunizations they need to stay safe. Tetanus, diphtheria, shingles, pertussis, flu, and now COVID-19 vaccines are vital to overall health.
- **Medical referrals:** A PCP can assess a health situation and refer a patient to the correct specialist if more extensive care is needed. However, many chronic conditions can be monitored and addressed by a PCP.
- **Cancer screenings:** UW Medicine, which specializes in patient care, research and physician training in Seattle, says most people will need a few cancer screenings as they age, including colonoscopies, Pap smears, mammograms and other important diagnostic tests for cancer. PCPs are usually the first line of defense against cancer and can ensure patients receive the screenings they need.
- **Non-life-threatening illnesses or injuries:** Unless a situation is life-threatening or severe, thereby warranting a trip to the emergency room, most people can visit their PCPs for help treating a variety of conditions. When in doubt, individuals should first consult with their general practitioners about the right course of treatment.
- **Routine lab work:** Blood and urine tests often are part of annual well visit checks. Many PCP offices have phlebotomists on staff so that lab work can be conducted in the convenience of one place and then sent out for testing.
- **Work or sports physicals:** Certain employers require physical examinations, as do schools and recreational sports leagues. PCP offices are the place to go for these types of examinations, which are generally recommended annually.

Primary care physicians are often the first people to turn to for a bevy of health and wellness needs.

THE BASICS OF MEDITATION

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5. Notice if your mind wanders. It's likely that your mind will wander to other places during your sessions. Pay attention to when it does and then refocus your attention to your breathing.

6. Don't judge yourself. Wandering thoughts during meditation are not deserving of scorn. When the mind wanders, simply return to meditating without obsessing over the thoughts that came into your head when your mind wandered off.

7. Close with kindness. As your session draws to a close, gently lift your gaze and take a moment to notice your surrounding environment, how your body feels and your thoughts and emotions.

Meditation can pay numerous dividends. More information about meditation can be found at mindful.org.

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How To Avoid Repetitive Strain Injuries

Repetitive strain injuries can upset workflow and compromise exercise routines. Though such injuries are often characterized as nuisances, for many people they're much more than a minor inconvenience.

Data from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration indicates that repetitive strain injuries (RSI) affect roughly 1.8 million workers in the United States each year. Such injuries are common across the globe, as researchers in Sweden estimate that roughly one in 50 workers is suffering from the symptoms of RSI. These injuries also are not limited to adults, with one study from researchers at Australia's University of Technology finding that 60 percent of children suffered discomfort when using a laptop.

The Cleveland Clinic notes that RSI most commonly affect certain parts of the body, including:

- fingers and thumbs
- wrists
- elbows
- arms
- shoulders
- knees

These areas of the body are vulnerable when people routinely engage in activities in which they repeat the same motions. For example, office workers who spend eight hours a day typing away at their computers may develop RSI in their fingers, thumbs, wrists and/or elbows. Such workers need their jobs, so what are they and others who suffer work-related RSI to do? Prevention of RSI is not always so easy, but individuals can try various strategies to reduce their risk of developing RSI.

• Make adjustments to your workstation. Individuals whose RSI are a byproduct of sitting at a desk and working on a computer all day long can adjust their workstations to see if this helps reduce strains. For example, a keyboard wrist rest is an inexpensive accessory that can be placed between users and their keyboards to keep their wrists in a neutral position and alleviate wrist pain that



results from typing all day. Mouse rest pads serve a similar function and can be equally effective. A keyboard and mouse pad should be low enough to allow users to relax their shoulders.

• Consider replacing your desk and/or chair. Desks and chairs also could increase risk for RSI if they are not compatible. Office workers should be able to pull their chairs beneath their desk when they're sitting and working. If the desk is too small or low to the ground to allow that, or if the chair is not adjustable so it can be pulled up to the edge of the desk while working, workers' posture could suffer, as they will be forced to lean into their desk and narrow their shoulders when typing. The Cleveland Clinic notes that improving posture helps people avoid putting extra stress on their bodies that can contribute to RSI.

• Get up and walk around. Prolonged periods of sitting can increase the risk of RSI. Sitting at a desk all day long without taking routine breaks means those parts of your body vulnerable to RSI, such as the wrists, elbows and shoulders, are not moving all day. The strain put on these parts of the body increases RSI risk, which underscores the importance of taking routine breaks.

• Stretch before sitting down. Stretching may be something associated with a workout routine, but the principles of stretching also apply to sitting at a desk. Exercise enthusiasts stretch to loosen and protect their muscles and

tendons from injury and the same idea can safeguard office workers as well. Some simple stretches throughout the day can keep muscles and tendons in the hands, elbows and shoulders loose and reduce the risk of RSI.

Individuals vulnerable to repetitive strain injuries can employ various techniques to reduce the likelihood that these painful and potentially debilitating conditions develop.

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