

## Regular exercise is the key for a healthy heart

22 August 2018 | Features | By Dr. Mohan Kumar HN

**The body loses stamina and strength gradually in the absence of regular physical activity, causing disability to function well.**



Exercising is very important to maintain a healthy weight and healthy heart. Regular exercising helps us by having an active life and makes the heart stronger. Daily activities should have some physical activity in our schedule a brisk walk in the park for 30-minutes would be a good start. Over a period of a week of exercising, the difference will be felt in your physical and mental state. Those who do not exercise regularly or used to a sedentary lifestyle are more likely to develop cardiovascular problems.

The body loses stamina and strength gradually in the absence of regular physical activity, causing disability to function well. Physical activity like a brisk walk or stretching exercise benefits in Preventing heart disease, lowering your risk of high blood pressure, diabetes and stroke.

The body's ability to use oxygen and improve the heart and lungs through exercise. Aerobic exercise profits the heart the most. aerobic exercise increases the heart rate and blood pressure thereby improves breathing.

Any aerobic activity like walking, swimming, light jogging, or biking, at least 5 times a week takes us a long way in being healthy. stretching or moving around to warm up your muscles and heart before exercising for 5 minutes is essential before a workout. It is equally essential to allow the body to cool down after exercise.

Along with exercise, it is very important to have the right foods that are good for the heart like eating vegetables, fruits and fish high in omega-3 fatty acid, such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring and trout. Nuts such as almonds or walnuts will keep us feeling satiated. Berries contain heart-healthy phytonutrients and soluble fibre. Bananas are rich in potassium, protein and dietary fibre. Potassium helps muscles to contract and nerve cells to respond. Bananas reduce the effect of sodium on blood pressure and keep the heart beating regularly.

Apart from exercise and food, water plays a vital role in keeping the heart healthy. It is best to avoid foods leading to high blood pressure as they can be harmful to your heart health. proper hydration helps in maintaining the body weight, which is essential for the heart. Hydration aids the heart in pumping about 2,000 gallons of blood a day.

Cardio, exercise keeps the heart rate up for a suspended period of time, this, in turn, helps to unclog the arteries along with other health benefits. The following exercises are beneficial to the heart.

1. **Stretching** - Stretching is an important aspect of exercising. It helps in becoming more flexible and improves endurance.
2. **Aerobic exercises** - Common exercises like moving at a fast pace are cardio, aerobic exercises. This helps in breathing harder by elevating the heart rate. Joint ailment patients should try low-impact cardio work out by walking or swimming.
3. **Running** - Running helps in giving a push to your cardiovascular fitness. sprinting in short intervals in order to avoid feeling breathless.
4. **Strength training**

Strength training involving usage of weights as a regime, building endurance and toning of muscles.

### **How much exercise is good for your heart?**

One must aim for moderate-level of exercising for a healthy heart of about 150 – 180 minutes in a week. This can be divided by 5 – 6 days of the week of 30 – 35 minutes per day. The intensity as per individual capacity should gradually start increasing in a way that there is a limited amount of stress on the body.

The pace and intensity of your workouts, in the beginning, the take-off should be at low speed for the first few minutes and end of your workout. This gives you the time to warm up and cool down. To enjoy the exercises, we should include a variety of exercises in your regime, to avoid boredom.

### **Precautions to be taken while exercising**

A consultation with the doctor is a must for people with heart ailments before taking up exercising. There has to be a constant check on how you are feeling during and after working out. If there is any pressure in the chest, pain in the upper part of the body, exercise should be aborted immediately and seek medical consultation if there is no improvement after some time.

In case of restarting exercises after a long break there is a possibility of sore and painful muscles, however, on continuous practice, this will go away.

**Dr. Mohan Kumar HN, Consultant – Interventional Cardiologist, Columbia Asia Hospital**