Laughing Your Way to a Healthier Heart

Laughter is powerful! It can lighten your mood and create a sense of connection with others. While positively impacting our cardiovascular health and boosting our immune system, it helps us to stay healthy and happy. Laughter is also an amazing tool for self-care, helping to reduce stress, depression and anxiety. When we laugh, we open our hearts and invite joy into our lives. The power of laughter is truly remarkable and can have a profound effect on our mental, physical and emotional well-being.

The Health Benefits of Laughter

There are many health benefits associated with laughter. These include:

- **Improved cardiovascular health.** Laughter greatly benefits the cardiovascular system. It can reduce blood pressure and slow down the aging process by preventing cell damage. Laughter may also help prevent the build up of plaque in the arteries

- **Improved immune system.** The positive effects of laughter on the immune system can help prevent diseases like the common cold, flu and other infections

- **Reduced stress and anxiety.** Laughing can help reduce stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms. It also helps to improve sleep, mood and the quality of relationships

- **Pain reduction.** Laughing can help manage pain and improve symptom management. This can be helpful for people suffering from chronic pain or serious health conditions

- **The release of endorphins.** These hormones produce feelings of well-being, happiness and pleasure. The release of endorphins when we laugh also increases our heart rate and blood flow, which makes the heart work harder. This can help flush out toxins, reduce blood pressure and protect the heart

- **Researchers estimate** that laughing 100 times is equal to 10 minutes on the rowing machine or 15 minutes on an exercise bike

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Simple Ways to Incorporate Laughter Into Your Daily Routine

If you want to get the most out of the power of laughter and reap the health benefits, you'll need to make it a daily habit. Here are some ideas to get you started:

☑ **Tune into your sense of humor.** This is the first step to getting more laughter in your life. What do you find funny? What makes you laugh? What makes you smile?

☑ **Make time for humor.** Once you've identified what makes you laugh, you'll need to make time for it in your daily routine. With the overabundance of streaming services and online videos, finding content that makes you laugh consistently is becoming easier every day. Your favorite sitcom is just a click away

☑ **Use humor to cope with stress.** Use humor as a coping mechanism to help relieve stress. When you're stressed, read or watch something funny. You'll be surprised how quickly your endorphins will make you feel better

☑ **Make laughter part of your social time.** This can be as simple as making time for friends or family members, and sharing a few laughs or attending local comedy clubs

☑ **Try journaling or keeping a gratitude journal.** Writing down what's good in your life or something you found especially funny can help you identify the things that bring you joy and make you laugh out loud

Taking Laughter to the Next Level

If you're interested in integrating laughter into your self-care and wellness journey on a deeper level, consider trying the following in addition to the tips offered above:

- **Laughter yoga.** Studies have proven that the body cannot differentiate between intentional/voluntary and involuntary laughter. One gets the same physiological and psychological benefits. It's called laughter yoga because of the diaphragmatic breathing that takes place when we laugh. At first the laughter is simulated — or "voluntary laughter" in yoga-speak — but slowly, as students warm up to each other, it becomes genuine and contagious. One can learn the art and skill of laughing for no reason — without relying on humor, jokes or comedy — and can feel the benefits on the very first session

- **Laughter therapy can be a powerful tool** to improve cardiovascular health and lower blood pressure. Regular laughter therapy is proven to reduce stress and strengthen the immune system. When laughter therapy is used regularly, it can also reduce blood pressure, lower the risk of heart disease and increase overall wellness

Conclusion

We all face pressures in life that can lead to stress and anxiety, and we now know that long-term stress and anxiety increase the risk of hypertension and cardiovascular disease. That's why it is so important to find ways to manage stress and anxiety. One of the best ways to do this is to laugh! Laughter has been proven to help reduce stress hormones and relax the muscles in your body. This prevents the buildup of cortisol and other stress hormones in the body, which can have a positive effect on your cardiovascular system. So go ahead and laugh at the funny video you just watched or tell some jokes to your friends. By doing so, you may be helping to prevent cardiovascular disease!