



## Show Your Heart Some L.O.V.E.

Circulatory health, also called cardiovascular health, is the big picture of how your heart works with all your blood vessels to deliver oxygen throughout your body. So, when something goes wrong with one, it usually affects the other. That's why having high blood pressure is a heart health issue—it makes your heart work harder to circulate your blood. Over time, this makes your arteries less elastic and decreases blood flow to the heart, which can lead to heart disease.

Did you know that every 33 seconds someone dies from heart disease? It's the leading cause of death among adults in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). However, you can lower your risk for this deadly disease by showing your heart a little L.O.V.E!



### LET FOOD BE YOUR MEDICINE

Food has a great influence over your health. While you may associate your diet with weight, it also greatly impacts your heart and the rest of your circulatory system.

Multiple diets are scientifically proven to reduce your risk for heart disease, including the Mediterranean diet; the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) and plant-based diets. These diets prove effective for several reasons, mainly their emphasis on lower sodium and fat intake. They also incorporate superfoods that are high in antioxidants such as berries, tomatoes and leafy green vegetables, all of which decrease the risk for heart disease.

No matter the foods you choose to include in your diet, one thing's for sure—eating plenty of fruits and vegetables decreases your risk for heart disease, cancer, stroke and more!

### OPEN UP TO MOVEMENT

Exercise: an essential part of a healthy lifestyle that we all benefit from. Moving your body helps increase your stamina and strengthen your muscles, but it also has several benefits for your circulatory system—especially since your heart is a muscle!

There are two main types of exercise, aerobic and anaerobic, and they each have different benefits. Aerobic exercise also called cardio, helps your heart in several ways:

- ♥ Reduces blood pressure
- ♥ Helps control cholesterol by increasing levels of HDL (the good cholesterol) while decreasing LDL (the bad cholesterol)
- ♥ 3. Decreases your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease and other illnesses.

You can add more cardio to your routine by going on walks, running, playing sports, swimming, skating—basically anything that increases your heart rate. Choose something fun so it's easier to commit to!

Anaerobic exercise or strength training is a great way to decrease your body fat percentage. This is important because being overweight or obese increases your risk for heart disease, especially if you're carrying extra weight around your waist. Strength training includes weightlifting, working out with resistance bands, body weight exercises like push-ups and more.

To get yourself on track for a healthy heart, you should aim for at least 30 minutes of cardio 5 days a week and 2 days of strength training!

### VISIT YOUR DOCTOR FOR ROUTINE CHECK-UPS

Are you getting routine exams each year? If not, you should! Visiting a primary care provider (PCP) for your annual physical can help you manage your overall health. Seeing your PCP regularly is also a great way to



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maintain a healthy heart. They monitor things like your blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol and other metrics that can signal an issue with your heart. Additionally, they possess the expertise to recognize when further evaluation is needed and will refer you to a cardiologist if any abnormalities are detected.

Early diagnosis and referral to a cardiologist can make a big difference in your quality of life. There are treatments that help people manage heart disease and recover from heart attack, stroke and other cardiovascular health issues. The earlier you access the care you need, the better. Make sure you see a PCP regularly so you can nip heart health concerns in the bud before they start causing bigger issues!



## ELIMINATE SMOKING

Smoking elevates your risk for heart disease, stroke and many other health issues. But the risk isn't limited to smokers—routine exposure to secondhand smoke increases your risk for these issues, too.

You don't have to resign yourself to the consequences of smoking. At least not forever. **If you quit smoking, you reduce your risk for cardiovascular issues starting almost immediately. Your increased heart**



### rate from smoking? Gone 20 minutes after you quit.

Elevated carbon monoxide levels in your blood? Back to normal 12-24 hours after quitting. Higher risk of heart disease? Drops to half the risk of active smokers.

Quitting is often easier said than done because smoking is highly addictive., Regardless of age or how long you've been smoking, your health will dramatically improve if you choose to quit. So, what are you waiting for? Kick the butt!

## A SMALL BITE: LINK BETWEEN DENTAL CARE AND HEART HEALTH

Have you ever considered the connection between your dental health and your heart health? It turns out they're very closely linked. Gum disease, for instance, not only increases your risk of heart disease but can also elevate blood pressure and increase the likelihood of infective endocarditis.

This condition, also known as bacterial endocarditis, is a heart infection triggered by bacteria entering the bloodstream and settling in the heart lining, a heart valve, or a blood vessel.

Practicing good oral hygiene decreases the risk of developing heart issues. The [American Dental Association](#) has a few key recommendations to help you keep your teeth and mouth healthy:

-  Brush your teeth twice each day
-  Use a fluoride toothpaste
-  Floss everyday
-  Don't overindulge in sugar

 Schedule regular dental visits. If you participate in Cook County's dental plan through [Guardian Dental](#), please visit the website to find out more about your dental care options.



**SOURCES:** [CDC.gov](#), [MayoClinic.org](#), [CDC.gov \(high blood pressure\)](#), [NIH.gov \(heart healthy diet\)](#), [Nature.com](#), [NIH.gov \(fruits & vegetables benefits\)](#), [ClevelandClinic.org](#), [HopkinsMedicine.org](#), [FDA.gov](#), [Lung.org](#), [NIH.gov \(gum disease\)](#), [AHAJournals.org](#), [Heart.org](#), [MouthHealthy.org](#)