

# Top 5 Exercises for a Healthy Heart

**Heart disease is the number 1 killer in North America and inactivity is one of the major risk factors. Because of this, it's never too early to start thinking about your cardiovascular health. Here are the top 5 exercises for a healthy heart:**

## 1. Brisk Walking

Walking doesn't require special equipment, can be done almost anywhere, and is effective at keeping your heart healthy. In fact, a recent study at the Harvard School of Public Health revealed that walking 30-60 minutes a day can reduce your risk for heart disease by 18%. Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that just two hours of walking per week can cut the risk of death from heart disease by 34%.

## 2. Running

Running is another heart-healthy activity that the human body is ready-made to do (barring physical limitations or injuries). Also, it is one of the best ways to burn calories (a 150-pound person can burn 100 calories per mile). If you are new to running, start with a brisk walk and add 1 to 2 minutes of running for every 5 minutes of walking. As you progress, you can increase your running until you don't need to walk in between.

## 3. Interval or Circuit Training

Interval training switches from fast to slow throughout an activity and circuit training involves moving from various types of activities. Each is a great way to mix up your cardio. For example, for every 3 minutes of cardio, do 1 strength training exercise or a high-intensity burst of cardio for 1 minute. The key is to move quickly from one exercise to the next so that you keep your heart rate up. This type of training will not only keep you motivated to exercise, it will also improve your muscular strength, endurance, and heart health.

## 4. Swimming

Lap swimming is great for your heart, but is also easy on your joints. The water also provides a multi-directional resistance that will improve your muscular strength and tone. Leisurely swimming doesn't really get your heart rate up, so be sure to keep a consistent and challenging pace.

## 5. Cycling

Cycling on a regular basis can significantly reduce your risk for coronary heart disease. In fact, the British Medical Association found that cycling 32 kilometers a week reduced the potential to develop heart disease by a whopping **50%**. Another benefit is that it uses the large muscle groups in your legs to elevate your heart rate, which helps to improve not only your cardiovascular fitness but also burns more calories, and has even been shown to improve mental health.

No matter what exercise you choose to do, 30 minutes for five days a week is an ideal place to start. Anyone with heart disease or risk factors for developing heart disease or a stroke should seek medical advice before beginning a workout program.