



So how (exactly) does exercise help the heart?

Exercise benefits the heart by decreasing its workload. Exercise improves the ratio between the heart's demand for oxygen and its supply through the coronary arteries.

With exercise, the heart gets stronger because it gets bigger and is able to pump more efficiently, according to Joseph Libonati, PhD, associate professor of nursing at Penn Nursing and a cardiac physiology expert.

Exercise allows your heart to push out a greater volume of blood with every beat and it does so at a lower heart rate. It also improves the blood flow to the heart by improving the heart's ability to have its coronary blood vessels dilate. Together, these changes improve both the supply and demand of the heart.

How does exercise lower high blood pressure?

Exercise helps lower high blood pressure by improving the ability of your blood vessels to dilate (grow larger), making the pressure on those vessels less. Exercise also improves your blood sugar levels and makes you leaner. This allows your heart to pump blood at lower pressures, thereby making your heart work less.

What exercise is best for the heart?

Using large muscle mass repetitively is best for heart health. Think about the acronym **FIT**:

- F** – Frequency (5 days a week)
- I** – Intensity (if you can talk, you're at the right intensity)
- T** – Time (30 to 60 minutes/day)

Why is exercise important as you age?

Exercise is important to maintaining healthy bones and muscles. As you age, you start to have smaller muscles and weaker bones. Activities that maintain muscles and bone mass help you age with a greater ability to function.

Resistance training or weight training is a good way to maintain bone mass, so making this type of exercise part of your daily routine is important into your 40s and beyond. Also, maintaining muscle mass helps the body's metabolism and can reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure.