Taking Care
of Our Hearts, Together

#ourhearts
are healthier together

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. One in four people dies of it each year. But there's a lot you can do to live a heart healthy life—and connecting with others can make your efforts even more successful.

Studies show that if you join forces with people at home, at work, in your community, or online, you have a better chance of staying motivated. Best of all, you don't have to make big changes all at once. Small steps can get you where you want to go. Just gather your friends and family, make a commitment to your heart health together, and you'll see!

Here's How to Start:

Move more

Get *at least* 2½ hours of physical activity each week—that's just 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. In addition, do muscle strengthening exercises at least 2 days a week. Can't carve out a lot of time in your day? Don't chuck your goal, chunk it! Try 5, 10, or 15 minutes a few times a day. Some physical activity is better than none.

Aim for a healthy weight

Being overweight is hard on your heart. It increases your risk of having heart disease, a stroke, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Choosing heart healthy foods and getting regular exercise will help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

How to Connect:

Get creative. Invite a colleague to join you for regular walks or an exercise class and put it on your calendars—then text or carpool to make sure you both show up. Grab your kids and do jumping jacks, shoot some hoops, or dance after you get home. For other low-cost activities you can do together, check your local parks and recreation department, religious institution, or community center for classes and activities. People with friends or family who support their efforts to be physically active are more likely to be successful, studies show.

How to Connect:

A study of one popular weight loss program showed that participants who were the most connected with others in the program's online community lost the most weight. Join a weight loss program with a buddy, or sign "social support" agreements with three family members or friends. Be sure your agreement includes ways to reduce stress, which affects energy and hunger and, if chronic, can make your body store more fat.

Pregnant women should not try to lose weight, but they should exercise unless their doctor tells them not to.

NIH National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

THE heart TRUTH

nhlbi.nih.gov/heartmonth

Eat healthy foods

A healthy diet that is low in sodium and saturated fat is key to heart disease prevention. Try the highly rated Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan. It recommends:

Eating vegetables, fruits, and whole grains

Eating fish, poultry, beans, nuts, vegetable oils, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products

Limiting foods that are high in saturated fat and sodium

Limiting sugar and other sweeteners

How to Connect:

When you go out to eat with friends, nix the all-you-can-eat restaurant, where people tend to overeat. If you get fast food, ask for a salad instead of fries, and don't get the "deluxe" sandwich. Bring a salad or veggie side dish to your next potluck, so you'll have something healthy to fill up on. Studies suggest that we tend to eat like our friends and family, so make healthy choices— and others may do the same.

Quit smoking

The chemicals in tobacco smoke harm your heart and blood vessels in many ways. Quitting is hard, but many people have succeeded, and you can too. Set a quit date and let those close to you know about it. Ask your family and friends for support in your effort.

How to Connect:

The websites **BeTobaccoFree.hhs.gov** and **Smokefree.gov** have many free resources, including apps and a chat line, to help you connect with others trying to quit. To keep your hands busy and be with others when you get urges, consider joining a group that focuses on sewing, knitting, woodworking, or other such activities.

Our hearts are healthier together!