**5 Ways to Improve Your Heart Health**

If you worry that you or someone you love will get heart disease or even have a heart attack, it’s understandable.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).

Research shows you can lower your risk, particularly if you team up with family, friends or co-workers. This kind of social support may be the key to your success.

To mark American Heart Month, NHLBI, one of the National Institutes of Health, is inviting people across the country to team up and join #OurHearts, a national heart health initiative that encourages people to improve heart health together.

“Studies show that having positive, close relationships and feeling connected to others benefits overall health, blood pressure, weight and more,” said NHLBI’s Dr. David Goff, director of cardiovascular sciences.

Consider these five tips that can help lower your risk of heart disease:

**Risk:** Inactivity

**Solution**: Move more throughout your day. Aim for at least 150 minutes each week of physical activity. Build up to activity that gets your heart beating faster and leaves you a little breathless. If you’re busy, try breaking your daily activity into 10-minute chunks.

**Stay motivated**: Make walking dates. Join a pickup soccer or basketball game. Join a fitness class with your neighbor. Grab a loved one and dance in your kitchen.

**Risk:** An unhealthy diet

**Solution:** Consider an option like NHLBI’s Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan, which is free and scientifically proven to lower high blood pressure and improve cholesterol levels.

**Stay motivated:** Invite friends to cook up heart healthy recipes together. Start a lunch club at work and trade recipe ideas.

**Risk:** Smoking, even occasionally

**Solution:** Quitting can be beneficial to your overall health, even if you’ve smoked for years. Set a quit date and let those close to you know. If you’ve tried quitting in the past, consider what helped and what made it harder.

**Stay motivated**: Ask your family and friends for support or join a support group. Find resources and connect with a trained counselor at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or [smokefree.gov](https://smokefree.gov/).

**Risk:** Inadequate or poor-quality sleep

**Solution**: Sleeping 7-8 hours each night helps improve heart health. Try going to bed and waking up at the same time each day. Getting a 30-minute daily dose of sunlight may also improve sleep.

**Stay motivated:** Resist that late afternoon nap. Turn off all screens at a set time nightly. Relax by listening to music, reading or taking a bath.

**Risk:** Uncontrolledstress

**Solution**: To help manage stress, try relaxation therapy and increase physical activity. Talk to a qualified mental health provider or someone you trust. De-stressing may also help improve sleep.

**Stay motivated:** Join a friend or family member in a relaxing activity like walking, yoga or meditation every day.

Learn about heart health and heart healthy activities in your community at [nhlbi.nih.gov/ourhearts](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/ourhearts). Use #OurHearts on social media to share how you and your friends, colleagues or family members are being heart healthy together.