

## Cardiovascular Health

"A good heart is better than all the heads in the world." ~ Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Your heart beats approximately 100,000 times per day, pumping your blood to deliver oxygen and nutrients to your body's cells and remove carbon dioxide and metabolic waste. In the course of your life, your heart will most likely beat more than 2.5 billion times, pretty amazing! Your heart takes care of you all day, every day. Are you returning the favor?



Cardiovascular diseases (high blood pressure, heart attack, hardening of the arteries, etc.) are the leading cause of death among Americans. More people die every year from cardiovascular diseases than of cancer, unintentional injuries, and HIV combined. More than **81 million** Americans are currently diagnosed as having one of these **preventable** diseases. What's more frightening is that a growing number of young children are exhibiting early symptoms of these diseases that used to only be prevalent in older adults.

The key word in all of this is preventable. While there is some measure of genetics involved, cardiovascular diseases are largely preventable. Most of us know that we should eat a diet low in saturated fats and animal protein and high in whole grains and fruits and vegetables. We know too that we should get at least 30-60 minutes of cardiovascular exercise most days of the week. But who among us has the time and energy to go for a walk or a bike ride before commuting to work and then come home and cook a healthy meal? It's so much easier sometimes to grab a quick bite on the way home and eat it in front of the TV. (Or if you're as busy as I am, eat in the car in between work and school. Don't worry, I've resolved to nip that one in the bud, and so far I've succeeded!)

Here are some tips to help you stay heart smart:

**Every Step Counts** - If you don't have 30 minutes to devote to cardiovascular exercise every day, park as far away from your destination as possible and give yourself a 5-10 minute walk to and from your car. If you do this 3-6 times/day you've just given yourself anywhere from 15-60 minutes of cardiovascular exercise. It doesn't matter that it was broken up into segments; your body still reaps the benefits.

**Snack Well** - Keep carrot sticks, apple slices, and any other cut fruits and veggies that you enjoy on hand in the fridge. If you cut plenty on the weekend or when you have time you can take them in a sandwich bag in your purse or lunch bag so that you have a healthy snack to stave off cravings while you are out and about. You'd be surprised how quickly a few handfuls of fruits and veggies can add up to your "Five-a Day". I have a new favorite healthy dip that makes veggie sticks fun to eat too, Majestic Garlic dips. They are made of garlic, safflower oil, flax oil, sea salt, and fresh herbs. They taste amazing and offer the benefit of fresh garlic and omega 3 and 6 fatty acids in the flax oil.

Source: Gina Axelson Pilates Instructor and Studio Owner

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