



AWARENESS

EXERCISE TO KEEP YOUR HEART STRONG

Every year, World Heart Day is celebrated on the last Sunday of September with activities such as fun runs, public talks, concerts and sporting events that take place worldwide to promote awareness around cardiovascular diseases (CVD).

According to the World Health Organization, CVD remains the number one cause of death globally, taking the lives of 17.9 million people every year. Unless there is a radical shift in behaviour change, numbers are expected to increase.

While minimising one's risk of CVD involves a multi-disciplinary approach toward creating and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, one of the best gifts you can give your heart is exercise.

Heart benefits of exercise

According to John Hopkins Medicine, exercise has the following cardiovascular benefits:

- 1. Brings down blood pressure.** High blood pressure is a major risk for CVD. Regular exercise helps to lower blood pressure and also helps to bring down one's resting heart rate.
- 2. Key to weight control.** Being overweight puts additional stress on the heart. Keeping physically active, along with proper nutrition, is an essential component for losing weight and keeping it off.
- 3. Helps strengthen muscles.** A combination of aerobic activity (walking, running, swimming) and strength training (weight lifting) is considered best for heart health.

These exercises improve the muscles' ability to draw oxygen from the circulating blood.

- 4. Can help you quit smoking.** Smoking is one of the top risk factors for heart disease because it damages the structure and function of blood vessels. Smokers who start exercising or training more seriously will often decide to quit when they realise how it limits their performance.
- 5. Slows the development of diabetes.** Studies have proven that exercise can reduce the risk of developing diabetes by over 50 per cent, by allowing the muscles to better process glycogen, a fuel for energy, which when impaired, leads to excessive blood sugars (and therefore diabetes).

Making time for exercise is a must

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that adults get at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, (or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity).

Additional tips from the AHA:

- Try to add moderate- to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activities (such as resistance training or weights) at least twice a week.
- Increase amount and intensity gradually over time.

Understanding how exercise benefits your heart can be strong motivation to become more physically active. Give your heart the love it deserves by committing to staying fit.