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6 Weeks of Heart Healthy Tips

Implement one tip a day for six weeks to improve your cardiovascular health

1. **Remember the turtle:** Slow and steady wins the race. If you start eating healthy and exercising on January 1 and lose just one pound a week, you'll be 52 pounds lighter on December 31.
2. **To make physical activity a habit,** choose an activity you really like. Then start slowly and gradually increase the time and intensity. Pretty soon, you'll have all the gain without any pain!
3. **Turkey surprise!** Replace the ground beef in your recipes with ground turkey. Then add more spices to make up for turkey's milder flavor.
4. **To increase your physical activity,** wear a pedometer for a week or two to find out how many steps you take on average each day. Then every two weeks increase your daily average by 500 steps. Before you know it, you'll hit 10,000 steps a day!
5. **Reducing your sodium intake** can help control your blood pressure. Do it gradually to let your taste buds adjust.
6. **Weight loss helps!** First, it lowers insulin resistance, so your natural insulin can do a better job. Second, it lowers your risk of cardiovascular disease by reducing blood fats and blood pressure.
7. **A fiber-rich diet helps lower LDL** (bad) cholesterol, raise HDL (good) cholesterol levels and helps control glucose levels. Fiber-rich foods include oats, peas, beans, apples and carrots. Your daily fiber intake should be 25–30 grams.
8. **Looking for new ways to boost your fitness?** Instead of letting your dog outside in the yard, take him for a walk. It will become a regular routine that racks up fitness points.
9. **Missing sweets?** You can still have them if you learn to substitute small portions of sweets for other carb-containing foods in meals and snacks.
10. **Want new ways to improve your fitness?** Help in your neighborhood. Consider volunteering for a landscaping project, helping elderly neighbors with their yards or working in community housing projects.
11. **Beware!** With toppings and dressing, fast-food salads can have as many calories as a hamburger. Pick darker greens and vegetables for their vitamin and fiber content and skip the croutons, sour cream and taco chips. Use low-fat salad dressing and dip your fork in it before spearing your salad.

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12. **Be creative!** Change "onefer" activities into "twofers." Do lunges while you vacuum. Stretch your neck and shoulders while you drive. And if you can, walk while you have a meeting.
13. **To reduce your sodium intake** to lower your blood pressure, use fresh, frozen and canned vegetables without added salt.
14. **Too tired for exercise?** That's why you should exercise. Being physically active will boost your energy, strength and stamina. Your heart beats stronger and pumps blood more efficiently, so all your body systems work better.
15. **Enjoy Crunchy French Toast.** It's low-fat, high-fiber and delicious. Dip whole-grain bread in a mixture of egg substitute and wheat germ. Cook on each side till brown in a skillet coated with nonstick cooking spray. Dust lightly with powdered sugar.
16. **Fit in fitness wherever you can.** Park farther from the door when you go to the bank. When your family visits for holidays, take a walk with them to catch up.
17. **Choose your calories!** That 100-calorie pie isn't the same as 100 calories of broccoli. The pie's calories come from fat, while the broccoli's comes from carbohydrates, fiber and minerals. Consider what will most benefit your body.
18. **Need a dumbbell?** Try a can from your pantry. Use different size cans for different size weights.
19. **End your meal with sugar-free, fat-free frozen yogurt** or a small cone of fat-free yogurt. Ices, sorbets and sherbets have less fat and fewer calories than ice cream, but they're chock full of sugar. They can spike your blood sugar if you don't work the extra carbohydrate into your meal plan.
20. **Skipping rope is a classic exercise** you're never too old to do. Use heavy cotton or hemp rope. To measure the right length, fold the rope in half. It should reach from your armpit to the floor.
21. **Be alert for traps.** Fat-free breakfast muffins may have lots of sugar. And skinless fried chicken can have almost as much fat as the regular kind.
22. **To work out harder on a treadmill,** increase the elevation. Or just walk once or twice a week in a hilly area to increase the intensity of your workouts.
23. **You don't have to give up all the foods you like.** It's the size of the portion that counts. And if you reduce the number of high-fat foods you eat, you can lose a significant amount of weight.
24. **Keeping a record of what you eat** every day is the best way to succeed at losing weight and keeping the pounds off. It helps you spot problems and patterns, and record your progress. Keeping up with your record takes practice but the benefits are worth it!
25. **When dining out,** focus on meat to cut fat calories. Choose grilled or broiled meats. Also look for lower-fat meats, such as sirloin. Finally, request a small serving size.

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26. **Use an instructional video** to try new activities that you don't want to try in a crowded gym. Choose videos that are less than five years old and are appropriate for your fitness level.
27. **The best vegetable oils are canola and olive oil.** They're low in saturated fat and have the most monounsaturated fat.
28. **Listening to music** can help make exercise more fun so you'll do it longer.
29. **When cooking,** use lower-fat substitutes. Use low-fat yogurt instead of sour cream. Replace ground meat with beans or rice. And substitute egg whites for whole eggs.
30. **If you tend to have cold or rainy weather,** consider an indoor stationary bike. If you have an outdoor bike you don't use, a device called a wind trainer can convert it to a stationary bike.
31. **Check the Nutrition Facts** label on frozen dinners. You want no more than 30 percent of calories from fat, 10 percent of calories from saturated fat and 200 mg of sodium for every 100 calories.
32. **Wearing ankle weights** while you walk is a great way to give your legs a workout. But don't walk too far because they throw off your natural gait and can lead to injury.
33. **Unrefined whole-grain foods have fiber** to help lower blood cholesterol and help you feel full.
34. **Travel often?** Don't just sit and read or watch television while waiting for a flight. Stretch your legs, and fit in some activity.
35. **Using herbs and spices** in your meals increases the flavor without affecting diabetes control. But beware of herb blends that contain sodium and salt, such as lemon pepper and garlic salt.
36. **If you often take taxis** to get around town, get out several blocks before your destination so you can walk.
37. **If your blood sugars are low,** don't eat chocolate. It tastes good, but it has a lot of fat, which your body absorbs more slowly. Choose a fat-free snack to get back to normal quicker.
38. **Empty tennis ball cans are great for weights.** Just fill them up with sand and duct tape them. Voilà, instant dumbbells!
39. **When you go out to eat,** ask the waiter to leave chips, French fries or other high-fat side dishes off your plate. Ask for vegetables or fruits instead.
40. Drink at least 6 to 8 ounces of water before and after any physical activity.
41. **Everyone has lapses** in their physical activity program. When you slip, catch yourself quickly, admit you've slipped, then go back. A lapse is just a lapse, not a failure.
42. **Put away your remote control this week.** See how much moving you do in one evening to change the TV channels.

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