



Exercise to Keep Your Heart Healthy

By Robin Weiss – Director of Fitness

February is American Heart Month, so I'm bringing you this special information.

Cardiovascular (commonly called Heart) disease is the number-one cause of death among American women. That's right, it's more deadly to us than breast cancer. On average, 1 out of every 2.6 American women loses her life to this often silent killer.

Survival TIP:

Know the signs of a heart attack in women

In addition to the typical male symptoms (pain or pressure in the center of the chest radiating to the neck and arms), women may feel severe indigestion, lower-chest and upper-abdominal pain, unexplained shortness of breath, sweating, nausea, upper-back pain, shoulder pain, or severe fatigue. If you experience any of these, call 911.

Heart disease is a condition that develops over time, beginning as early as adolescence. Bad habits formed in young adulthood catch up to us later in life. Problems like high cholesterol, obesity, high blood pressure, smoking, and physical inactivity are all contributing factors in coronary artery disease, which is the most common form of heart disease.

Here's another scary thought. One out of every three American teenagers is so out of shape that climbing stairs leaves them winded! Researchers from Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago say that this unhealthy trend is setting our teens up for a lifetime of serious health problems. While none of the teenagers in their study showed signs of problems such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure, the researchers say it's only a matter of time before their inactive lifestyles catch up with them.

Fortunately for all of us, there are things we can do to prevent heart disease. Along with not smoking, we can eat a healthy diet, maintain a healthy weight, and get plenty of exercise.

Physical activity plays a crucial role in keeping our heart healthy. Our heart is a muscle, and like any other muscle, it needs sufficient exercise in order to stay fit and healthy. Regular exercise helps us maintain healthy blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels, and it's the key to maintaining a healthy weight.

The American Heart Association recommends that we exercise for 30 minutes everyday at a moderate intensity level. The 30 minutes is cumulative over the course of the day. Every minute that you are breathing out of your comfort zone (where you can talk but not sing) counts. So, "I don't have time" is not a valid excuse.

What can we as parents do for our teenagers? We can take advantage of the Teenage Membership or Family Add-On Special at Kathy's Healthclub and encourage our teenagers to workout. We can challenge them to take classes with us instead of sitting in front of the television or computer. We can show them how these changes can add up to big payoffs when it comes to their health. Teenagers tend to think they'll be young forever, but we know differently! Help them get on a healthy path now so they'll have healthy years later!

Reference: Everydayhealth.com 2008