

# Health Club Newsletter

## Love Your Heart and it will Love you

### 10 steps to having a healthier heart

We all know that the key to having a healthy heart means a combination of not smoking, regular cardio exercise, no excessive drinking and a clean diet with reduced fat and sugar content. However, there is more you could be doing...

1. **Be happy!** Do your utmost to lead a happy and positive lifestyle! This will go a long way to reducing the amount of physical and emotional stress you put your body and heart through. An increase in stress levels can lead to an increase in blood pressure (hypertension) which can lead to an unhappy and unhealthy heart!



2. **Laugh!** 'Laughter is the best medicine' and is proven to help reduce stress levels in one of the most natural ways. It also helps to strengthen your immune system by releasing health enhancing hormones, another positive step towards keeping your heart at its best.

3. **De-stress.** We all know that physical activity is good for you and your heart, but healthy exercise doesn't always mean endless gym sessions consisting of plodding away on the treadmill! Yoga and Pilates are forms of exercise which help promote stress reduction and mental calmness, something which is crucial when it comes to looking after your heart.



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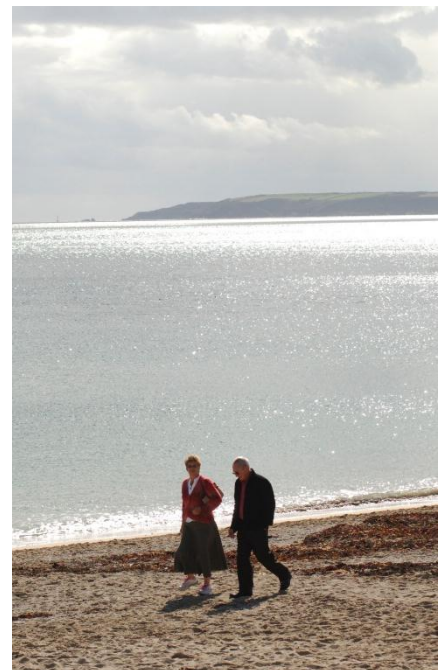
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### 4. **Sleep!** Aim for 7 – 8 hours sleep every night.

Studies have shown that a lack of sleep is detrimental as our body begins to release high levels of the stress hormone 'cortisol'. It has also been noted that people who sleep 5 hours or less a night were linked with a higher risk of heart disease. In addition, taking up to 30 minutes to nap during the day may also reduce this risk.

**5. Leave the salt alone, food naturally has it in already!** Reducing the amount of salt in your diet is another way of reducing your blood pressure and ensuring you don't put overdue stress on your heart and blood vessels. You should try to consume no more than 6 grams of salt per day. Try to resist adding salt to your food and cooking as the majority of foods already have high quantities of salt in them. Try to think 'fresh and local' to avoid foods with added extras.

**6. Holistic health.** Try taking a more holistic approach to maintaining your health and looking after your heart. Don't overlook your psychological, physical, social, spiritual and environmental state, all of which play important roles in keeping your health balanced. Keep your mind calm through relaxation techniques. Keep your body energised and maintained through physical activity and fresh air. Having a strong social and family circle has been shown to be helpful for your general health and also preventing heart disease!



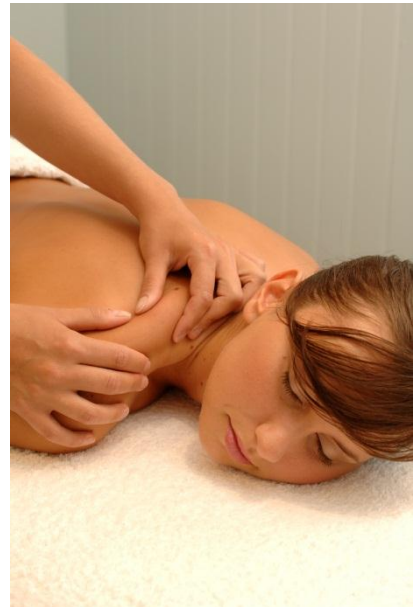
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7. Think **Lifestyle Change** and looking at the whole picture as opposed to one or two aspects such as focusing on dieting or reducing alcohol intake alone. By living and eating in a healthier way, you will feel better, have more energy and be more confident and a happier person. This will ultimately lead a more balanced level of health and a happy heart.



8. **It's all about you!** Try to find time in the day for 'you' to relax, relaxing is not getting rid of excess energy in the gym, relaxing is where you stop everything and chill for a certain time, even if it's only 10 minutes!!! It will help improve your circulation and lower your blood pressure, giving your heart a bit of down time! Our jobs tend to be quite stressful, and an elevated level of stress at work is linked to heart disease, so make sure you take a few minutes during the day to think about your health and what's really important!



9. **Get plenty of potassium!** A low level of potassium can lead to an irregular heartbeat. Consuming a good amount of potassium helps regulate our heartbeat and keeps it pumping healthily. Potassium is found in bananas, potatoes, avocados, oranges, raisins, figs and strawberries.

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10. **Understand cholesterol and the importance of antioxidants.** Not all cholesterol is bad for you; there are two types of cholesterol, the good type and the bad type! We need a certain amount of good cholesterol for our heart to function properly and remain happy! Anti-oxidants help prevent the bad cholesterol clogging up our arteries, minimising the chance of any heart complications.



Below is a list of foods that contain anti-oxidants AND good cholesterol! They also help lower bad cholesterol levels, so it's a win, win, win situation!

### **Your heart will love it!**

- “ Tea (green tea especially) have a high level of anti-oxidants, they help flush out any bad cholesterol, keeping you cleansed and healthy!
- “ Garlic and onions are powerful anti-oxidants with antibacterial and antifungal properties.
- “ Eggs contain high levels of GOOD cholesterol, contrary to popular belief! They are also loaded with vitamins and minerals!
- “ Avocados contain un-saturated fat (the good stuff) so helps lower bad cholesterol.
- “ Cocoa is an excellent anti-oxidant and is found in dark chocolate... so you can indulge every so often!
- “ Fish and shellfish contain high levels of Omega-3 fatty acids, the good stuff that we need to help reduce levels of bad cholesterol.
- “ All fruit and vegetables are high in anti-oxidants, vitamins and minerals, so consume a rainbow!



*Love yourself, love your heart and it will  
beat longer for you...*