

Types of exercises to try (Cleveland Clinic Health Essentials)

Doing aerobic or cardio [exercise](#) is the best way to improve your heart health.

“The biggest thing that gets overlooked is that you can keep it simple,” says Dr. Van Iterson. “It’s really thinking about what we consider cardio or aerobic exercise like walking. For others, it can be running or jogging. It all depends on where you’re at in your life and identifying realistic goals, what recent background you have with exercising and if you have any risk factors like a family history of heart disease.”

Also, remember, you can break up those minutes into many small segments spread throughout the week or aim for 30 minutes five days a week. You won’t always have 30- to 40-minute blocks to dedicate to your exercise, but don’t let that discourage you from exercising. Even if you can get 10 minutes in a day, it’s worth it.

“Exercise on a routine basis is something that’s important when people are trying to get to 150 minutes,” says Dr. Van Iterson. “It’s more than just getting to that magical mark.”

Here are a few examples of exercise that benefits your heart health:

- Brisk walking.
- Jogging or running.
- Swimming.
- Cycling.
- Climbing stairs.
- Rowing.
- Cross-country skiing.

“All these types of activities involve a more controlled and sustainable type of exercise,” says Dr. Van Iterson. “And that’s what’s going to typically yield the strongest cardiovascular benefits.”

Why your heart rate matters

You may have a fitness tracker that calculates your heart rate. But what does it mean exactly? Your heart rate is the number of times each minute that your heart beats, which is normally between 60 and 100 times per minute while sitting or lying down for adults.

Keeping track of your heart rate when you exercise can help you monitor how much physical stress you're experiencing and know if you're working out in a way that benefits you and your body the most.

"Heart rate is useful because it's a marker of intensity," says Dr. Van Iterson. "There's this balance between exercising enough in order to achieve the cardiorespiratory benefits of exercise and avoiding exercising too much or being too intense with it."

Having that data, which includes figuring out your target heart rate zone, will help you exercise more effectively on a consistent basis and have a better chance of achieving and maintaining your desired results.

"Oftentimes, it's really difficult for individuals to really know what that threshold or cut-off is just based on how you feel," notes Dr. Van Iterson. "So when you have additional markers to refer to such as a target heart rate zone then it provides you with more information on how hard you're actually exercising."