

# Is your exercise program heart-healthy?

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

You're getting to the gym regularly. Meeting your friends for a walk around the block. Maybe aerobics class is your go-to exercise. But is your exercise program the best for your heart health?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the U.S. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one person dies every 34 seconds in the U.S. from cardiovascular disease.

Experts agree getting [regular exercise](#) is one of the best ways to fight [heart disease](#). Exercise has a number of benefits including helping [lower blood pressure](#) and cholesterol, maintaining [healthy body weight](#), and strengthening your heart muscle.

If your goal is a heart-healthy exercise program, Dr. Regis Fernandes, a Mayo Clinic cardiologist, says there are two key things to remember when exercising for optimal heart health.

## **Time**

When it comes to exercising for optimal heart health, Dr. Fernandes says the first thing to keep in mind is the amount of time you spend each week exercising. He recommends aiming for a minimum of 150 minutes per week for optimal [heart health](#) benefits.

"You can break that down into three days or five days, whatever works for your schedule. You can certainly do more if you want. But the important thing is to get in at least 150 minutes total each week," says Dr. Fernandes.

## **Intensity**

The second key component of a heart-healthy exercise program is to stay at a [moderate intensity level](#).

"Walking, biking, swimming, anything where you're moving the large muscles in the body, it is important to be a moderate intensity," says Dr. Fernandes.

To ensure you maintain a heart-healthy moderate intensity, you can use a heart rate monitor. Alternatively, Dr. Fernandes says an easy way to gauge your exercise intensity is by simply monitoring your breathing.

"If you're walking and breathing by your nose, you're not at that level yet. If you're walking and you cannot talk, that's too high," says Dr. Fernandes. "So the sweet spot for moderate intensity is just breathing by mouth, but you're still able to talk to someone."

For the best overall health, Dr. Fernandes recommends an exercise program that includes resistance or strength training, like lifting weights, along with regular cardiovascular exercise. Remember, it is always recommended you check with your health care professional before beginning any type of [exercise program](#).

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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