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# BOOSTING HEART HEALTH WITH DIET AND EXERCISE

Your heart is the engine that powers your body, continuously pumping blood, oxygen, and nutrients to keep you alive and thriving. Maintaining a healthy cardiovascular system is essential for living a long, vibrant life. Fortunately, two of the most effective ways to protect and strengthen your heart are through diet and exercise. Together, they form a powerful combination that can reduce the risk of heart disease, improve overall health, and enhance your quality of life.

## Nutrition and Heart Health

What you eat has a profound impact on your heart. A heart-healthy diet can reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, lower cholesterol levels, and maintain healthy blood pressure. Prioritize these dietary strategies to promote heart health:

- **Embrace Heart-Healthy Foods:** A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins provides the nutrients your body needs to function optimally. Fruits and vegetables are packed with antioxidants that combat inflammation and oxidative stress, while whole grains and fiber help lower bad cholesterol levels. Healthy fats, such as those found in avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil, support heart health by reducing harmful cholesterol and promoting good cholesterol.
- **Limit Sodium and Sugar:** These can contribute to high blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes, all of which are key risk factors for heart disease.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Proper hydration supports blood circulation and helps maintain healthy blood pressure levels.

## Physical Activity and Heart Health

While diet lays the foundation for cardiovascular health, exercise is the engine that keeps your heart strong and resilient. Regular physical activity strengthens the heart muscle, improves circulation, and helps manage risk factors like high blood pressure and cholesterol. Incorporate these types of movements for a balanced exercise plan:

- **Aerobic Exercise:** Activities like walking, jogging, swimming, and cycling are excellent for improving heart health. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week.
- **Strength Training:** Incorporating resistance exercises, such as weightlifting or bodyweight exercises, at least twice a week can help build muscle, reduce fat, and improve metabolism.
- **Flexibility and Balance:** Yoga, Pilates, and stretching exercises enhance flexibility and reduce stress, which can indirectly benefit heart health by lowering cortisol levels.

Taking care of your heart is a lifelong commitment, but it doesn't have to be overwhelming. Small, consistent changes in your diet and exercise routine can lead to significant improvements in your cardiovascular health. By nourishing your body with wholesome foods, staying active, and adopting heart-healthy habits, you can reduce your risk of heart disease and enjoy a healthier, more fulfilling life.