# Give your heart health a boost with these 5 daily practices

Cardiovascular diseases are a leading cause of death globally, accounting for nearly **18 million deaths each year**, according to the World Health Organisation.

By prioritising heart health, we can prevent complications like hypertension, which affects around **1.13 billion people worldwide,** and other serious conditions.

Many of these conditions are preventable through lifestyle changes. Here are five practices you can start today that can significantly lower the risk of heart disease!
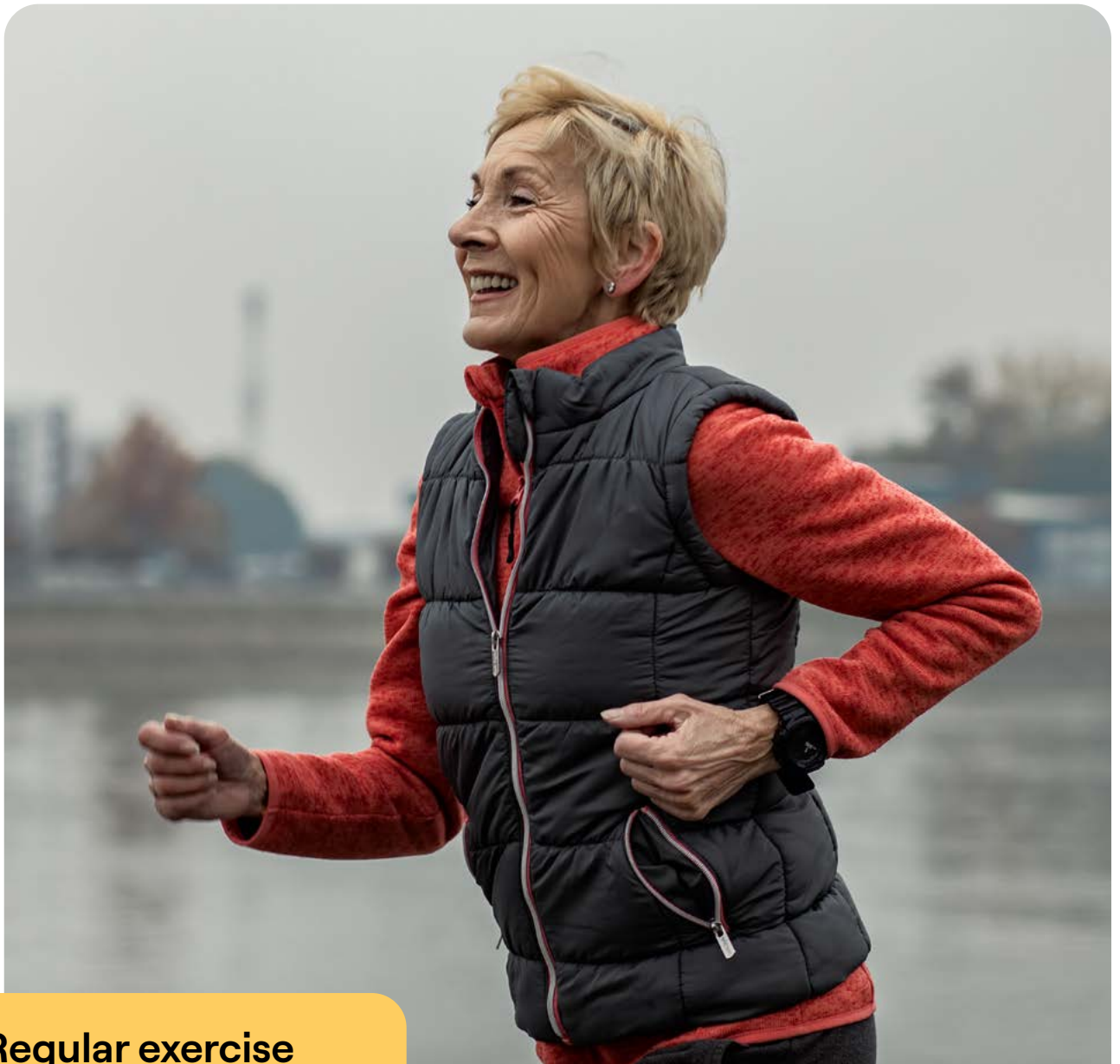
1. Regular exercise

Regular physical activity is vital for heart health. It can **reduce the risk of heart disease by up to 35%**. Regular physical activity can also lower blood pressure, reduce bad cholesterol levels, and boost good cholesterol. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week, as recommended by health experts.

Simply standing up and moving around every 30 minutes while working from home can positively impact your wellbeing. Even going on a brief, **six-minute walk daily**, can have profound effects—research suggests it could add up to four years to the average lifespan and reduce the likelihood of cancer. Incorporating **strength training** into your routine is beneficial as it not only builds muscle but also enhances balance, which is crucial for reducing the risk of falls as we age and reduced blood pressure.

2. Healthy eating

What we eat directly affects the health of our heart. Reducing intake of trans and saturated fats can lower the risk of coronary heart disease by about 21%. A diet high in **fibre**, **omega-3 fatty acids**, and **antioxidants** can help prevent heart disease and maintain a healthy blood pressure and cholesterol level.

Eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can also do wonders for your heart. It's also been proven that herbs and spices have positive effects on our gut bacteria and therefore overall health. Cut down on **salt, sugar**, and **saturated fats** found in processed foods. Cook at home as often as possible, using herbs and spices for flavour, and choose healthy fats like olive oil and avocados.

3. Stress management

Long-term stress leads to a continuous increase in heart rate and blood pressure, which wears down the cardiovascular system. Studies indicate that **stress is associated with a 20-25% increased risk of developing coronary heart disease**. Managing stress is not just about feeling better mentally; it's also about giving your heart a break and reducing the risk of heart-related problems. Stress is an inevitable part of life, but chronic stress can harm your heart.

Practice **relaxation techniques** such as **deep breathing**, **meditation**, or **yoga**. Set aside time for hobbies and interests that bring you joy, and don't hesitate to seek support from friends, family, or professionals when needed.

4. Regular check-ups

Regular health screenings are essential for detecting early signs of heart conditions, often before symptoms become noticeable. While traditional check-ups with healthcare providers are valuable, accessing these services can sometimes be challenging. Therefore, it's important to be aware of alternative options for monitoring your heart health. Over-the-counter **tests for cholesterol** and **blood pressure monitors** for home use are readily available, offering a convenient way to conduct some health assessments. These tests can be a practical approach, especially when regular access to a healthcare provider is difficult. It's generally sufficient to **check cholesterol levels once every few years**, rather than annually.

Blood pressure can be monitored at home, or you can take advantage of **free testing services** offered at some pharmacies. Many GP surgeries also provide blood pressure machines in their waiting rooms, allowing you to check your levels without needing an appointment. Remember to keep a record of your family's heart health history and discuss any concerns or symptoms with your healthcare provider, even if your interactions are less frequent.

5. Quitting smoking

Smoking damages the lining of the arteries, increases the buildup of plaque, raises blood pressure, and reduces the amount of oxygen that gets to the body's tissues. Those who smoke have a **50% higher chance of developing heart disease** than those who don't. Kicking the habit can rapidly improve heart function and decrease the risk of developing heart disease. Seek out **support groups** and consider **replacement therapies** or **medications**.

Contact HealthHero today for more support and advice. We're with you every step of the way.