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Caring for your heart

A guide for healthier habits

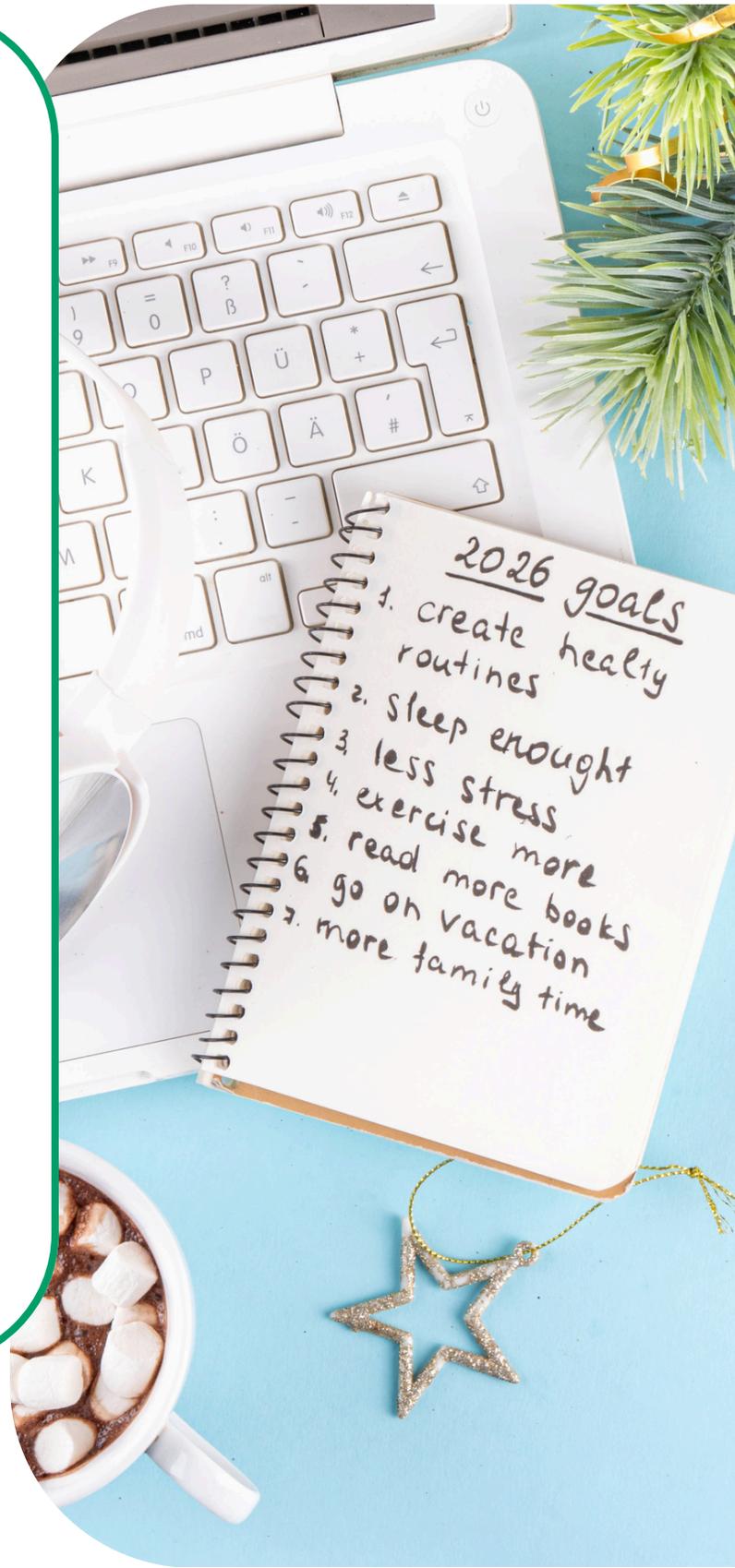


February often reminds us of hearts in many forms, from Valentine's cards to store displays. But it's also an ideal time to reflect on the heart that keeps you going every day.

Many of us set out in January with health goals, but by now, around 80% of New Year's resolutions tend to fade. Instead of focusing on quick fixes, small, sustainable changes to your lifestyle can have a profound impact on your heart health.

Heart disease is a leading cause of death globally, but lifestyle changes can reduce the risk of heart attacks by up to 80%.

Let's explore simple steps you can take to care for your heart and overall well-being.



Food That Loves Your **Heart Back**

What you eat has a huge impact on your heart health. The good news? It's not about strict diets or giving up everything you love—it's about balance.

Incorporating nutrient-dense foods into your daily routine can make a big difference. Focus on these heart-friendly choices:

- **Vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes.**
- **Herbs and spices for flavour without added salt.**
- **Healthy fats from nuts, seeds, and olive oil.**

Minimise foods with little nutritional value, such as sugary snacks, fried foods, processed meats, and refined grains. Reducing these can support healthy blood pressure, cholesterol, and overall heart health.

Studies, such as the Lyon Diet Heart Study, demonstrate that diets like the Mediterranean approach—rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains—can significantly reduce the risk of heart-related complications.

Tip:

Keep your plate colourful! The more variety of fresh, whole foods you eat, the happier your heart will be!



Move Your Body, *Love Your Heart*

Exercise doesn't have to mean hours at the gym or running marathons. A 30-minute brisk walk, a swim, or even a dance around your living room is enough to get your heart pumping.

Regular exercise improves circulation, lowers blood pressure, and helps maintain a healthy weight.

Recommendations for activity:

- 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week (e.g., brisk walking, cycling).
- Strength exercises twice a week to preserve muscle mass (lifting a few weights or even carrying groceries counts).

Physical activity doesn't have to be complicated. Choose activities you enjoy—whether it's a walk at lunchtime, a dance class, or joining a local sports group.



Sleep, **The Secret to a Healthy Heart**

Sleep is crucial for heart health. During sleep, your blood pressure lowers, and your heart rate decreases, allowing your body to rest and recover.

Tips for better sleep:

- Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night.
- Limit screen time and bright lights an hour before bed.
- Create a consistent bedtime routine to signal your body it's time to rest.

Evidence suggests that insufficient sleep increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart attacks, and other cardiovascular issues. Prioritising rest is an investment in your health.

Managing Stress **for a Healthier Heart**

Stress is part of life, but too much of it can take a toll on your heart. Learning to manage stress effectively can improve not only your heart health but your overall quality of life.

Practical strategies include:

- Breathing exercises, like box breathing, to help calm your mind.
- Physical activity to release tension.
- Incorporating mindfulness or meditation into your daily routine.

Research also highlights the benefits of positive psychology practices, such as gratitude and having a sense of purpose. These can reduce inflammation and support cardiovascular health.





Steps to Start Today

Looking after your heart doesn't have to be overwhelming. Small, consistent actions can have a lasting impact.

Quick tips to get started:

- Swap processed snacks for nutrient-dense alternatives like nuts or fruit.
- Take a 10-minute walk after meals to get your body moving.
- Establish a regular bedtime to improve your sleep quality.
- Spend time with loved ones—connection is good for your heart.

By focusing on these manageable changes, you're not only supporting your heart but enhancing your overall well-being.

Your heart works tirelessly to keep you going, and it deserves care in return. Through mindful nutrition, regular exercise, quality sleep, and effective stress management, you can take meaningful steps toward a healthier heart and a better quality of life.

Making even small adjustments today can lead to big benefits for your future.

How can Doctor Care Anywhere help



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- Assessment, treatment and support, including access to therapy and digital health tools.



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