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A Weekly Column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

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For Immediate Release

Keep Your Heart Healthy

Renee Sweers, Human Sciences Specialist, Nutrition and Wellness

February is Hearth Month. See how heart healthy your lifestyle is by checking out these eight tips adapted from recommendations by Dr. Laurence Sperling, MD, FACC, FACP, FAHA, professor of medicine in cardiology, director of the Emory Heart Disease Prevention Center in Atlanta, and chair of the American College of Cardiology's Cardiometabolic Disease Prevention Committee.

1. **Exercise more.** The minimum recommended for adults is 2.5 hours per week, or 150 minutes per week. That breaks down to 30 minutes five days a week. The 30 minutes can even be broken down into three 10-minute segments. The more you break it down, the more doable it sounds.
2. **Sit less.** Most of us spend a lot of our day sitting, whether at work, driving, watching TV, or using a computer. "A recent paper basically said that ... if you're sedentary more than 10 hours a day, that correlates with risk for vascular disease," says Sperling. Try to move 10 minutes for every 60 minutes of sitting.
3. **Eat well.** Focus on fruits and vegetables, whole grains and legumes. Round out the diet with lean dairy and protein. The ISU Extension and Outreach *Spend Smart Eat Smart* (<https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/>) website contains a wealth of information on eating well.
4. **Slash sugar.** Americans love their sugar. Keep track of sugary beverages and snacks and figure out a way to cut back.
5. **Don't ignore your weight.** Losing weight and maintaining weight require different behaviors, but both are important. "You can make significant gains in health....with very modest weight loss," says Sperling. Focus on attainable goals, and weigh yourself often. To lose weight, you will need to eat 500 fewer calories a day, burn 500 extra calories, or some combination of diet and exercise.
6. **Manage stress.** Stress impacts the blood vessels, making it harder for them to relax, which increases the risk of heart disease. Ask yourself: "What are some of the things I can do to reduce or better manage stress in my life?"
7. **Sleep better.** "Six to eight hours is probably the ideal amount of sleep for most adults," says Sperling.
8. **Know your numbers.** Keep track of your health stats using a chart or log, says Sperling. Keep track of your blood pressure, your blood cholesterol and lipid levels, and your blood glucose levels.

Start today to work on these eight tips for a healthy heart.

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