

5 Simple Ways to Boost Your Heart Health This Fall

Every month, organizations from all around the world hold observances for a variety of medical conditions. These campaigns are designed to bring awareness to these ailments and encourage folks to get screened or contribute to research that will hopefully lead to cures. There are [over 20 in September](#) alone! But this month, we wanted to go back to basics and spotlight the powerhouse of our entire bodies; the heart!

As the center of your entire cardiovascular system, your heart is essential to thriving in your daily function, athletic performance and long-term health. With a new season upon us and a new chance to dive into even healthier routines and habits, we here at Peak Pilates® wanted to provide some ideas to help care for your “ticker” this Fall.

Here are five proven practices to consider as you set out on this mission:

1. Carve Out a Cardio Routine

Cardio helps maintain healthy weight, which in turn boosts your heart health. It has also shown to provide several other positive health effects for your heart, such as a reduction in “bad” cholesterol (LDL), an increase in “good”



cholesterol, lower blood pressure and a reduced risk of heart disease.

Thankfully, process-oriented routines like Pilates can develop cardiovascular endurance, strength and flexibility. If you are among those who have fallen behind on their cardio recently, there’s no need to worry. There are a myriad of solutions, from walking more each day to joining a local [Spinning class](#)®. For folks who like to stick closer to home, there is equipment that can boost their cardio routine, like the [Pilatesstick](#) or a home [Spinner](#)® bike. There are options for everybody, so don’t hesitate and get moving today![\[1\]](#)

2. Remember Your Breath and Flow

While Pilates typically gets lauded benefits of increased strength and flexibility, but few remember the incredible mind/body benefits of the practice as well. Joe Pilates adopted movements from yoga and the emphasis on breath in his development of contrology. Remember that the heart pumps oxygenated blood to the muscles, so the intake of this oxygen is crucial.

The strong emphasis that Pilates exercises put on controlled

breathing is the primary reason it improves your heart health. It is also an excellent way to reduce stress, which your heart will surely appreciate! Not all of those health effects take a long time to kick in when completing process-oriented routines like Pilates and yoga for only a short amount of time (over two weeks) can help provide you with heart-related benefits![\[ii\]](#)

3. Learn to Say ‘No’ to Your Sweet Tooth

They say that breaking up is hard to do, and with its endorphin in eliciting response, sugar is difficult to say “no” to.



This is especially true when it sneaks into our food as *added sugar*, which can be found in many common processed foods. Most US adults consume more added sugar than is recommended for a healthy diet.[\[iii\]](#) Combine that with the fact that too much added sugar could increase your risk of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity-related cancers, and there’s plenty of reasons to cut back on sweets.[\[iv\]](#) [\[v\]](#)

To properly take care of your heart, you should aim to consume less than the American Heart Association’s recommended daily amount of added sugar – no more than 36 grams, for men and 24 grams for women). Last year, we looked

at [some heart-healthy snacks](#) like pumpkin seeds that will hopefully satiate your sweet tooth. Follow those guidelines and say no to your sweet tooth this February to give your heart a helping hand.[\[vi\]](#)

4. Ease up on Salty Snacks

In addition to avoiding the sugary snacks, monitoring the amount of sodium in your diet is another proven practice that can help keep your blood pressure at normal levels. Like sugar, salt is a big flavor that unleashes endorphin in our brains, and 89 percent of American adults are still consuming more than the recommended daily amount (2,300 milligrams).

One likely reason so many people are eating excessive sodium is the common misconception that sodium only comes from the salt shaker. The reality is that sodium is found in many popular processed foods, sometimes in large amounts. For instance, a single slice of bread can have anywhere from 80 to 230 mg of sodium, and one slice of frozen pizza can have between 370 and 730 mg. So this season, do your heart a favor and keep track of your sodium intake.[\[vii\]](#) [\[viii\]](#)

5. Opt to Add Avocado

If you're already looking for joy over this nutrient-packed green, it's time to consider adding more of it to your diet. Luckily, for those of you



that don't enjoy its taste, avocados are so nutrient-dense that it only takes a small amount to redeem its healthy heart benefits.

Eating just one-half of an avocado can provide you with a series of nutrients and phytochemicals including dietary fiber, potassium, magnesium, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin K1, folate, vitamin B-6, niacin and more. Also, compared with other fruits, avocados are very low in sugar with about 0.2 grams for every half you eat.[\[ix\]](#)

Whether you take all of these suggestions and run with them, or only implement one, remember that your heart keeps you moving every moment of every day. This Healthy Heart Month, take the time to return the favor for all of the hard work your heart puts in each day!

This article was contributed by James Gardikas, Digital Content Manager – Mad Dogg Athletics

[\[i\] http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/107/1/e2.full](http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/107/1/e2.full)

[ii] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3221193/>

[iii]

<http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1819573>

[iv]

<http://news.heart.org/survey-sugar-is-bad-but-people-cant-stop-eating-it/>

[v]

<http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1819573>

[vi]

<http://www.healthline.com/health/sugar/healthline-survey-results#overlaySources>

[vii] <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6452a1.htm>

[viii]

http://www.cdc.gov/salt/pdfs/sodium_dietary_guidelines.pdf

[ix] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3664913/>