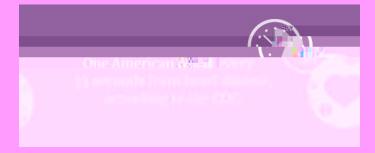# 3 Ways to Boost Your Heart Health

Heart disease continues to be the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that heart disease causes 1 in every 5 deaths. Heart disease refers to several different types of heart conditions. Coronary artery disease—caused by plaque buildup in the walls of the heart's arteries—is the most common. Other forms of heart disease include heart attack, heart failure, arrhythmia and congenital heart defects.

The symptoms of heart disease can vary, and some people may not even know they have a heart condition until they have a heart attack. Red flags include shortness of breath, chest discomfort, difficulty with speech, heart palpitations and sudden loss of responsiveness.

Exercise Your Way to a Healthier Heart

Certain uncontrollable factors increase your risk of heart disease, including age, sex and family history. However, other factors that increase your risk for heart disease—such as stress, inactivity, obesity, diabetes, smoking and a poor diet—are controllable.

A healthy diet and lifestyle are the best ways to fight heart disease, so consider incorporating these three types of exercise into your routine to improve your heart health:

1. Aerobic exercise improves circulation and can help your cardiac output. Get at least 30 minutes a day of heart-pumping moderate activity—like brisk walking, dancing or cycling—at least five days a week.

2. Resistance training with weights, bands or body weight at least two nonconsecutive days per week can help create leaner muscle mass. When paired with aerobic activity, you can raise your good cholesterol levels and lower bad cholesterol levels.

3. Flexibility workouts (e.g., stretching and balance) are critical for musculoskeletal health. It's important to stay flexible and free from joint pain so you can maintain your regular aerobic and resistance workouts.

Keep in mind that the overall pattern of your life choices can determine your heart health. Contact a health care professional to find out your risk for heart disease or for more information.