

February is “Heart Health Month” By Orthopedic & Spine Therapy of Poplar

February is oftentimes looked at as a wasted month that we must simply survive in order to get one step closer to spring. It is a month that cabin fever traditionally sets in and is also when our New Year’s resolutions are put to the ultimate test of dedication. February also holds many important events including Groundhog’s Day, the Super Bowl, and Valentine’s Day. Given all of the events going on, few people know that February is also considered national “Heart Health Month.” So even though the holiday season has passed and our New Year’s resolutions have lost their luster, February can still be an excellent opportunity to celebrate our health.

We all know by now that regular exercise is good for the heart. According to the American Heart Association, all healthy adults ages 18-65 should be getting 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity five days a week. For those outside this age population or those with chronic conditions, consult your physical therapist or physician to discuss an appropriate activity level.

Thirty minutes of activity five days a week may seem like a daunting task to some, but there are opportunities to increase your activity level every day if you take a little extra time to look.

Here is a list of a few heart healthy opportunities:

- **Doing house work at a brisk pace**
- **Taking the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator**
- **Parking farther away from you destination (when time and conditions allow)**
- **Walking your dog or taking a family walk after dinner (weather permitting)**
- **Snowshoeing or cross country skiing**
- **Snow shoveling (careful on your back)**

Being active ten minutes three times a day is a great starting point. Slowly increase the duration of activity level until you can sustain 30 minutes of continuous activity. Always begin by warming up before your activity and cooling down after. Remember, you should feel your heart rate increase but still be able to maintain a conversation while doing your activity.

Having an active lifestyle does not only help your heart but also reduces stress, strengthens bones, and improves sleep among other benefits. It takes 21 days to start a new good habit, so let’s make the most of February.

Keywords: heart, heart health, ideas for exercise, heart rate, active lifestyle, New Year’s resolutions