



Bergen County Health: Listen To Your Heart by Gerald Sotsky, M.D., Chair of Cardiac Services, Valley Medical Group



How much exercise is best for your heart? A new study by Valley's partner Cleveland Clinic reveals that Americans aren't sure. As February is American Heart Month and heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women, we at Valley encourage you to listen to your heart. Heart disease is largely preventable and controllable, and exercise is one of the keys to preventing heart disease.

The new Cleveland Clinic survey shows that only 20 percent of Americans know how much exercise is recommended for a healthy heart and that 40 percent of Americans are exercising less than the recommended amount, which is 2.5 hours a week of moderate aerobic exercise. Between work, being too tired and obligations to family and friends, Americans say there are many obstacles to get them to get moving.

Heart disease kills about 1 in 4 Americans, but many of these deaths could be prevented by simple lifestyle changes, such as these:

- Exercise 30 to 60 minutes a day on most days of the week, such as taking a daily walk.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Quit or don't start smoking.
- Eat a diet that's low in saturated fat, cholesterol and salt.

A little exercise can go far, potentially reducing the risk of dying from heart disease by as much as 40 to 50 percent. Almost everyone, with or without heart disease, should exercise. It improves blood flow, leads to lower blood pressure and will help you live longer.

All month long, Valley will be posting heart healthy tips on Facebook so be sure to follow them at [Facebook.com/ValleyHospital](https://www.facebook.com/ValleyHospital).

Everyone should know if they have risk factors for heart disease. To learn more about Valley's free Cardiac Screening Program, which is designed to help individuals identify their personal risk for developing cardiovascular disease and to provide education on leading a heart-healthy lifestyle, visit www.valleyheartandvascular and click on Women's & Men's Heart Health in the blue menu bar.

Valley Health System is a regional cardiovascular affiliate of the Cleveland Clinic Heart & Vascular Institute — the No. 1 heart hospital in the country.