



# HEART HEALTH



UnityPoint Health  
Trinity

## Outdoors is Good for Heart Health

As the weather turns warmer many of us will be returning to outside activities like mowing the lawn, gardening, taking walks, pickleball, and golf. These are all great ways to exercise for heart health. Getting outside has other benefits for your heart too.

**Improves Your Sleep:** The outdoors helps set your sleep cycle. Cells in your eyes need enough light to get your body's internal clock working right. Sunlight in the morning in particular helps people get to sleep more easily. This is even more important as we age, our eyes are less able to absorb light when we are older. This is why being outdoors, even ten minutes on a cloudy day can help you get to sleep at night.

**It Lessens Anxiety:** When outdoors in nature our bodies

reduce their levels of cortisol, muscle tension, and demands on our cardiovascular system by lowering heart rate and blood pressure. Many people report just feeling better by getting outside. This benefits the whole body including the heart.

**Movement Bouts Are Longer:** When people are outdoors, they tend to exercise for longer periods of time and greater intensities. This makes movement enjoyable and easy to stick with. You may not even realize you exercised when you get outdoors.

**Challenges Your Body:** When moving outdoors the terrain is ever-changing, your body then is more challenged than when working out indoors. Good news is you likely end up with a stronger body.



### Walking Shoes

Walking is one of the simplest exercises you can do to protect your heart. Here are some tips to put your best foot forward as you get outside and do more walking.

**Shop late in the day:** Because your feet tend to expand by the end of the day, it's best to try on new shoes when your feet are at their largest.

**Look for a low heel:** Stay away from shoes with big bulky heels, which can hinder the natural rolling foot motion of walking and may make you more prone to tripping.

**Check for wiggle room:** Allow at least one finger's width between your longest toe and the front of your shoe, as your feet may swell more in warm weather and on longer walks.

**Give it a bend:** Grab the toe and heel of a shoe and pull them toward each other. The shoe should bend easily at the ball of the foot. This flexibility offers a greater range of motion and an easier push-off.

A good pair of shoes means longer walks and happy feet.

# Are Salt Substitutes Safe?

Most salt substitutes contain potassium chloride. For most potassium chloride tastes like salt, though some people pick up on a metallic taste.

There are certain health conditions like reduced kidney function, or if you take certain high blood pressure medications, including ACE inhibitors and potassium-sparing diuretics that should avoid potassium containing salt substitutes.

So be aware that if you are on high blood pressure medications you may need to stay away from salt substitutes.

What works best is to focus on an eating pattern full of foods that are naturally low in sodium. This also allows you to lower your threshold for detecting sodium. The preference for salt is learned, which means you can unlearn the preference. It may take about 2 weeks of food tasting bland, but foods will come back to life with flavor, some salt flavor, but at a much lower level. Consider using salt free seasonings from Mrs. Dash and Flavor Mate or other seasonings that often come in no salt versions like Italian seasoning and Herbs de Provence.

Also, when you move away from a desire to have salt in all your foods, you open your palate to new

flavors that don't depend on salt or salt substitutes. Your taste buds will be awakened, and you will discover new flavors and flavor combinations.

When you can lower your salt intake significantly, it not only reduces your risk for heart problems but also renal failure, senility, erectile dysfunction, stomach cancer, kidney stones, and osteoporosis.

## Next Heart to Heart Educational Event

**Pritikin Comeback** is a Heart to Heart event open to past Pritikin program participants and the community to learn more about this series and the life-saving effect it has had on many people's lives right here in the Quad Cities. Listen to past participants as they share their personal stories.

## Upcoming Cooking with Heart Series

**Cooking with Heart for Cancer** May 7 | Noon  
**Cooking with Heart for Diabetes** June 5 | 6 p.m.  
**Cooking with Heart Foundational** June 6 | 5:30 p.m.

Sign up for all classes by calling (309) 779-5399 or online at [unitypoint.org/CookingWithHeart](https://unitypoint.org/CookingWithHeart)

