

# Pedal your way to better health

**Bicycling is more than a fun activity.  
It's a great way to improve your health.**

Did you know riding a bike can be a healthy and fun way to prevent many health issues, like heart disease, diabetes and stroke?<sup>1</sup> It can also help you manage your weight. And it's easier on your knees than jogging or running. Every time you get on a bike — whether it's just for fun or for a big race — you're taking big steps toward improving your health now and in the future. Below are a few other health benefits of bicycling.

## **It can lower your blood pressure and bad cholesterol — and prevent heart disease**

About one in three adults in the United States has high blood pressure, which is a serious health issue that can cause heart disease. If your blood pressure reading is too high (above 120/80), you might have high blood pressure.<sup>2</sup>

Bad cholesterol, known as LDL cholesterol, can also cause heart disease. This type of cholesterol is a fatty material that can build up in the arteries leading to your heart. Too much bad cholesterol can cause a blockage in the arteries, and even a heart attack.

The good news is that cardiovascular activities, like biking, can lower your blood pressure and bad cholesterol. To stay healthy and prevent heart disease, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends at least two and a half hours of moderate-intensity activity, such as biking, each week.<sup>3</sup> Just think — if you bike 20 minutes per day, you can make a huge difference in your long-term heart health!

## **Bicycling can help lower your cancer risk**

When you exercise regularly and control your weight, you lower your risk for developing many types of cancer, such as cancer of the breast, colon, rectum, esophagus, pancreas and kidney.<sup>4</sup> When you're overweight, your body creates more hormones that can lead to abnormal cell growth or cancer.



## Bicycling can help you manage stress, depression and anxiety

Have you noticed that you're happier after a long workout or a day outside biking? That's because, when you exercise, your body releases chemicals called endorphins. This chemical goes to your brain and gives you positive feelings. When you ride a bike and do other exercise regularly, you're more likely to feel happier, instead of stressed, depressed or anxious.<sup>5</sup>

## Bicycling has been known to improve balance

Balancing not your thing? It turns out, the more you bike, the more you can improve your balance, too! One study, reported in a May 2006 issue of *Clinical Rehabilitation Journal*, found that bicycling can improve balance and motor skills. This is especially helpful for people recovering from stroke and accidents, and who are looking for ways to regain their balancing skills.<sup>6</sup>

## Even better, anyone can start bicycling!

No matter your fitness level, you can ride a bike. All you need is basic gear and a desire to learn! Start out slowly and push yourself to learn more each time you go out. People with physical challenges can bicycle, too. In fact, many bike shops carry specially designed equipment to help them bicycle.



## Like what you've learned here?

Go to [anthem.com/pedaltohealth](http://anthem.com/pedaltohealth) to learn more about the health benefits of bicycling. This new and interactive website covers the basics of biking and teaches you how to improve at this exciting sport!



1 The League of American Cyclists website: [bikeleague.org](http://bikeleague.org).

2 The National Institutes of Health website: *What is High Blood Pressure* (accessed January 2015): [nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hbp](http://nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hbp).

3 The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: *How Much Physical Activity Do Adults Need?* (accessed January 2015): [cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/adults.html](http://cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/adults.html).

4 American Cancer Society website: *Diet and Physical Activity: What's the Cancer Connection?* (accessed January 2015): [cancer.org](http://cancer.org).

5 WebMD website: *Exercise and Depression* (accessed January 2015): [webmd.com](http://webmd.com).

6 MedlinePlus, *The influence of early cycling training on balance in stroke patients at the subacute stage*: (May 2006): [cre.sagepub.com/content/20/5/398.abstract](http://cre.sagepub.com/content/20/5/398.abstract).