

Healthy Together

Eating better and getting fit is easier when you partner up.

BY JINO DEMELO



HOP ON YOUR BIKES!
Ditch the car for pedals: Find a bike-friendly path in your town using the Google Maps biking feature.

THINK ABOUT IT: WHEN YOUR HUSBAND breaks out a pint of ice cream, do you dig in too? Are you more motivated to take a walk if he offers to tag along? If you answered yes, then you know just how significant your spouse's impact on your health can be. And a study in *JAMA Internal Medicine* found that when

one partner began exercising more, lost weight, or stopped smoking—all of which can lower the risk of heart disease—the other was likelier to make a positive change too. So tackle these heart healthy challenges as a team.



Work toward a common goal Whether it's a local Turkey Trot or a walkathon, having similar motivations can keep you both on track—especially if you do it on your own terms. "Going to the gym at the same time every day isn't always realistic, especially if your schedules or fitness levels don't line up," says exercise physiologist Michelle Lovitt. What is possible: Review your training logs every week and praise each other's progress.

Sync your sleep

Skimping on zzz's can raise your risk of heart disease, says cardiologist Martha Gulati, M.D., division chief of cardiology at the University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix. To get the recommended seven hours, pick a general bedtime you and your partner can agree on, and turn off your devices an hour beforehand. Even if one of you isn't quite ready to sleep, make a commitment to get into bed at the same time each night to prevent slumber disruption.

Set up some healthy competitions

A little rivalry helps ramp up your accountability, and you can start with food and exercise. Use the free step counter on your iPhone to see whether you or your partner achieves the most steps each week, and invite friends for team cook-offs to see who can make the tastiest vegetarian taco combinations. *Game on!*

Grocery-shop as a team

"If you both go to the store, you can make the choice together to switch from white bread to whole wheat or to buy the ingredients for a new healthy recipe, and no one will feel resentful," says Keri Gans, R.D., author of *The Small-Change Diet*. While you're there, select a flavored sparkling water you can swap in for soda.



HOW TO GET HIM TO SEE A DOCTOR Your best bet is to focus on the positive. Let him know that you want to live a long life together and scheduling a checkup is an important part of that. You can also ask him to make an appointment for the sake of your children or family if he doesn't want to do it for himself, says Dr. Gulati.