



Media Release – 29 August 2024

Celebrating Dad: A Positive Approach to Heart Health This Father's Day

As Father's Day approaches us here in Aotearoa, we are reminded to celebrate the dads in our lives. Dads can play a crucial role in their families, providing support, guidance, and stability, yet their contributions may often go unrecognised when it comes to their own health. Due to prevailing mainstream stigmas, the well-being of fathers is frequently overlooked, as they are often expected to be the strong, silent pillars of the family, even at the expense of their own health. Therefore, ExerciseNZ would like to highlight recent studies that serve as a reminder that being a dad comes with its own set of challenges, including an often-overlooked toll on heart health.

Recent studies published in the Journal of the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research and the American College of Preventive Medicine revealed that fatherhood can significantly impact a man's cardiovascular health as he ages. The study, which analysed the health of over 2,800 men, found that fathers face increased risks of poor cardiovascular health due to the demands and stresses of fatherhood. Moreover, the findings also highlight the unique challenges faced by younger fathers, especially those from minority groups, such as Māori and Pacific Islanders here in Aotearoa. Men who became fathers before the age of 25 were found to have poorer heart health and higher death rates.

It is no mystery that one of the best antidotes to both prevent and counteract these challenges is through regular exercise. This not only has significant impacts on heart health, but also on overall well-being. In order to support our dads in being the best fathers and role models they can be, here are four key tips based on both recent studies and Exercise NZ recommendations.

1. **Prioritise Regular Exercise:** Engaging in regular physical activity is essential for maintaining heart health. Even with the demands of fatherhood, making time for exercise can significantly reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.
2. **Monitor and Manage Stress:** The stress associated with the responsibilities of fatherhood can negatively impact heart health. Fathers should explore stress management techniques, such as mindfulness or relaxation exercises, to maintain a healthier lifestyle.
3. **Focus on a Heart-Healthy Diet:** Adopting a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can help fathers improve their cardiovascular health. Avoiding processed foods and excessive salt is also crucial.
4. **Avoid Smoking:** Fathers who smoke are at a higher risk of poor cardiovascular health. Quitting smoking not only benefits their own health but also sets a positive example for their children.

Exercise NZ would like to emphasise that the best gift we can give our dads is the encouragement to prioritise their own health, ensuring they remain happy, healthy, and active role models for years to come. Let's stand together in supporting the well-being of all fathers, honouring the vital role they play in our families and communities. For more information on this release or to arrange an interview, please contact Richard Beattie at richard@exercisenz.org.nz or P: 0800 66 88 11, M: 027-520-5744. For more information on this release or to arrange an interview, please contact Richard Beattie at richard@exercisenz.org.nz or P: 0800 66 88 11. M: 027-520-5744