

Can too much exercise harm the heart?

By Gretchen Reynolds, New York Times

With many of us contemplating marathons or other prolonged endurance events in 2016, we, our spouses and other family members most likely have wondered whether such strenuous training could be harmful to our hearts. Could any of us, in making ambitious resolutions, exercise too much?

A newly published scientific review offers both reassurance and some caution. It found that while most athletes' hearts can withstand most exercise, there are exceptions. For some people in seemingly good health, heavy loads of exercise might be problematic. That's why all of us who work out should be as informed as possible about our family's cardiac history and our own potential genetic risks.

Exercise, of course, is in general extremely beneficial for heart health. Dozens of large-scale epidemiological studies have found that people who exercise in any amount, whether five minutes a day or two hours a day or more, are much less likely to develop or die from heart disease than people who are sedentary.

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