



NEWS RELEASE

**WORLD HEART DAY – 30TH SEPTEMBER 2007
TEAM UP FOR HEALTHY HEARTS!**

Liverpool Captain and England Footballer Steven Gerrard, Australian Cricket Fast Bowler Brett Lee, and ex-Liverpool and ex-Lyon FC manager Gérard Houllier Give Support

You have nearly three times more chance of maintaining weight loss and twice the chance of giving up smoking if you join a group rather than trying alone^{1,2}. That's way this year's World Heart Day on Sunday 30th September is urging people to "Team Up for Healthy Hearts!" and has the support of major international team sports stars including Liverpool FC captain and England footballer, Steven Gerrard MBE, fast bowler for the Australian cricket team, Brett Lee, and ex-Liverpool and ex-Lyon football clubs' manager, Gérard Houllier .

Heart disease and stroke is the world's largest killer, claiming 17.5 million lives a year – 80% of these in low- and middle-income countries. The good news is that heart disease and stroke is largely preventable if the main risk factors, including high blood pressure, high levels of cholesterol and blood glucose, tobacco use, inadequate intake of fruit and vegetables, overweight and obesity, and physical inactivity are reduced³.

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¹ Benefits of recruiting participants with friends and increasing social support for weight loss and maintenance (Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 1999, vol. 67, no. 1, pp.132-138 (10 ref.))

² Stead LF et al: Group behaviour therapy programmes for smoking cessation. Cochrane Collaboration. 2005

³ World Health Organization. Preventing Chronic Diseases: A Vital Investment: WHO global report. Geneva: WHO Press; 2005

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Commenting on why World Heart Day is so important, Steven Gerrard said: “More than skill, technique or athleticism, football is about heart. That's why I'm encouraging everyone to team up for healthy hearts for this year's World Heart Day - to eat healthily, take regular exercise and avoid smoking.”

At the moment at least 60% of the world's population fails to achieve the minimum recommendation of 30 minutes moderate physical activity daily - 60 minutes for children⁴. And adults and children also need to establish balanced diets with plenty of fruit and vegetables, whole grains, lean meat, fish and pulses, plus low fat and low salt products.

In its eighth year, World Heart Day is run by the World Heart Federation's member organizations in over 100 countries with thousands of people expected to join in events this year. In Ireland over 400 groups of families and friends, from communities and workplaces are teaming up for World Heart Day walks. In Mozambique, a major World Heart Day event will include mass aerobic sessions. And in Barbados a Heart Healthy Family day is planned to build team spirit. Other World Heart Day activities will include health checks, organized walks, runs and fitness sessions, public talks, stage shows, scientific forums, exhibitions, concerts, carnivals, and sports tournaments.

“As an Australian Government Healthy Active Ambassador, it's my role to motivate everyone, young and old, to get healthy and active” said Brett Lee. “A healthy active lifestyle can help lower your risk of developing chronic diseases like heart disease and stroke. Let's start exercising a little more, eating better and cutting down on junk food, so we can live a long and healthy life!”

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⁴ Norton D et al. Parental influence on models of primary prevention of cardiovascular disease in children. European Journal. Of Cardio Nursing 2(2003) 311-322

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Everyone, young and old, is being asked to support each other to develop healthy heart habits, whether it's with their family, school, workplace or other community group.

“Children as young as ten reflect the health habits of their family, peers and social environment and current research shows that eating and exercise habits form at this age and stay with people for life⁵,” said Professor Shahryar Sheikh, President of the World Heart Federation. “Therefore, primary prevention of heart disease and stroke needs to start young with parents and other community groups recognizing the opportunity they have to make a real impact on this disease”.

G rard Houllier, ex-Liverpool and ex-Lyon football clubs' manager also said:

"Having personally suffered from a heart condition I know how important it is to maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle in order to prevent the risks of heart disease or stroke in later life. Maintaining a sensible weight, eating healthily and stopping smoking will all reduce the risk factors connected to heart disease, but sometimes people need help in achieving these goals. That is why I'm glad to lend my support to the World Heart Day under the theme 'Team Up for Healthy Hearts!'."

For more information about World Heart Day 2007 and events happening near you, visit www.worldheartday.com.

– Ends –

Editors' Note

The World Heart Federation has the following tips to help protect people and their families from heart disease and stroke:

1. Encourage everyone to eat well-balanced meals, including (steamed, boiled, grilled or baked) lean meat, fish, vegetables, pulses, fruit and low fat products.

⁵ Norton D et al. Parental influence on models of primary prevention of cardiovascular disease in children. *European Journal. Of Cardio Nursing* 2(2003) 311-322

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2. Provide at least five daily servings of vegetables and fruit.
3. Offer water, low fat milk or fresh, unsweetened fruit juices to drink rather than soft drinks.
4. Include fruit or vegetables in your children's school lunch or snack. Convince your child's friend's parents to do likewise. Get their teacher's support to put healthy eating on the classroom agenda.
5. Make sure you don't consume excess salt, especially through processed foods.
6. Plan more family activities outside. Add 30 minutes of regular physical activity daily and build physical activity into day-to-day chores. Take the stairs rather than the lift, for instance.
7. Make your home smoke-free and try to ensure that your children don't smoke or experience tobacco smoke anywhere else.
8. Limit screen time. Keep the TV or computer off as much as possible and make sure your children's leisure time is packed with plenty of physical activity. Why not go with your child to school by foot or bicycle.
9. As a family member, set a good example by eating healthily, being physically active on a regular basis and by not smoking.
10. If you think anyone in the family is at risk of heart disease, check with your health professional.

About the World Heart Federation

The World Heart Federation is a nongovernmental organization based in Geneva Switzerland dedicated to the prevention and control of heart disease and stroke, with a focus on low- and middle-income countries. It is comprised of 195 member societies of cardiology and heart foundations from over 100 countries covering the regions of Asia-Pacific, Europe, East Mediterranean, the Americas and Africa. For further information visit: www.world-heart-federation.org

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