



Heart Healthy at The Heartland Spa

Do you need help jump-starting a heart-healthy lifestyle? Check out the offerings at The Heartland Spa.

Imagine yourself dozing in a lounge chair overlooking a placid lake, the gentle buzz of honeybees scurrying across the fuzzy centers of purple coneflowers drifting to your ears. You've just had a busy day of spinning, walking, and yoga followed by a full-body massage, and you're as pleasantly tired as you've ever been.

This is what life is like at the very low-key Heartland Spa, two hours south of Chicago, and it's an excellent way to get inspired to take control of your cardiovascular fitness, something the spa prides itself on promoting. About 30% of the spa's clientele come because they have heart health concerns, says executive director Mary Quinn. "We don't

believe in diets here," she says. "We teach stress management, exercise, nutrition, and metabolism."

And the programs are highly personalized, meaning that if your doctor has warned you about your high blood pressure and high cholesterol, staff at The Heartland Spa will set up a two- to five-day program for you that specifically addresses those concerns.

"We speak with everyone who makes a reservation and we take a very personal approach," Quinn explains. The spa accommodates only 32 patrons at a time, so the atmosphere is intimate and the programming customized. You can even sign up for a one-on-one fitness or diet assessment or personalized nutrition counseling.



If you haven't exercised in a while or are under doctor's orders to take things slowly, that's OK, according to Quinn. The spa will get you going slowly with aquatics workouts, which are less strenuous on the body because of the weightlessness water provides, as well as with low-impact aerobics sessions during which staff members will elevate and monitor your heart rate.

And if you need to ramp up your exercise routine, there are plenty of advanced programs available, including dance, kickboxing, and Pilates. All the more intense physical activities are balanced by more relaxing sessions such as tai chi and yoga, and spa treatments are included as well. Anyone who reserves a five-day package receives four full-body massages and a facial.

Spa meals are ample but nutritious, designed to be low in fat, sodium, and calories but high in flavor. Women at the spa take in about 1,500 calories a day and men 1,800. What's even better is that The Heartland Spa offers cooking demonstrations to help clients take the healthy lifestyle home, focusing specifically on stocks, marinades, and dressings—the parts of meals that often carry the most calories and fat.

"Many of our clients who come to us with cardiovascular problems are also overweight," says Quinn. "Everything is OK in moderation, so we work on retraining your brain. There is very little that is forbidden if you just take a bite or two."

Quinn says 70% of The Heartland Spa's clientele are repeat visitors, with many clients

coming back at least yearly. "We try to be a safe haven," she adds. "We ask people to quit being so hard on themselves. This is not a quick fix."

Many spa guests, particularly women, feel guilty about taking time for themselves to be healthy, exercise, and pamper their minds and bodies, Quinn explains. But with the increasing problem of childhood obesity in this country, she encourages parents to set good examples for their children: "You have to set the example of caring for yourself," she says.

Packages at The Heartland Spa include three meals a day, snacks, lodging, all fitness programs, and spa treatments. For more information, visit www.heartlandspa.com. ♣

— Deborah R. Huso

