

Benefits of Regular Exercise

Exercise plays an important role in the normal healing process after a heart attack or heart surgery. Having cardiovascular disease and conditions such as angina, a heart attack or heart surgery does not necessarily mean you have to take it easy for the rest of your life. A regular exercise program can provide you with physical and emotional benefits that will help you restore your strength and well-being.

Regular exercise can help to:

- Increase your energy
- Maintain your independence
- Build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints
- Decrease your heart rate
- Reduce your risk of dying prematurely
- Reduce your risk of dying from heart disease
- Control diabetes and reduce the risk of developing diabetes
- Control and reduce your risk of developing high blood pressure
- Increase the HDL “good” cholesterol
- Decrease the LDL “bad” cholesterol
- Reduce your risk of developing certain cancers
- Reduce feelings of anxiety and depression
- Control and reduce weight
- Promote psychological well-being and improve quality of life

Outpatient Cardiac Rehabilitation

MeritCare Cardiac Rehabilitation will arrange your initial visit and get you started on your program of cardiovascular fitness. For more information call (701) 234-5659 or (800) 437-4010, ext. 5659.

Appropriate activities and exercise when you return home

Based on the guidelines you were given in the hospital, ease your way into everyday activities. Your exercise program should include additional exercise beyond the everyday activities you do at work or at home. Exercise does not have to be strenuous. Choose an activity you enjoy that is practical and fits your lifestyle. Exercise can be simple and inexpensive—walking in your house or outside is as beneficial as any activity requiring expensive equipment.

General Activity Guidelines

- **Listen to your body!** It will tell you what you can and can't do.
- Your energy level may vary from day to day, so adjust your exercise levels to how you feel.
- Use the talk test—you should always be able to comfortably carry on a conversation while exercising.
- Warm up gradually before exercise and cool down afterward.
- Do not exercise to the point of soreness. It does not have to hurt to be good for you.

Driving a vehicle

If you had open heart surgery, it is generally recommended that you do not drive for four weeks with doctor approval.

Household duties

Light housework, such as light cooking or folding laundry is okay after a few days. For specific guidelines regarding household chores please ask your cardiac rehab staff.

Lifting

Initially, limit yourself to lifting only **5 to 10 pounds**. The amount of time you will need to follow this restriction will vary according to your diagnosis. Avoid heavy lifting, pushing, pulling or straining that requires you to hold your breath and bear down. This can suddenly lower your heart rate and result in dizziness. Activities such as vacuuming, scrubbing, shoveling, moving furniture and tilling a garden are too strenuous for you during your initial recovery. Remember to breathe normally through all activities.

Stair climbing

Going up stairs takes two to three times the energy required for walking at the same speed on level ground. Climbing stairs can be a good form of exercise, but you'll initially need to take stairs slowly and stop and rest as needed.

Sexual activity

If you can climb two flights of stairs or perform a similar activity without having symptoms of angina, shortness of breath or being overly tired, your heart can meet the demands needed for sexual activity.

Resuming sexual activity is a common concern for people with heart disease. There are informational booklets specifically designed to help answer questions about your feelings, the physical demands, risks, positions and medications. These booklets are provided upon request.

After meals

Wait at least one hour after a large meal to exercise. The digestive system requires extra blood after eating a meal. This may reduce your ability to tolerate immediate physical activity.

Snow shoveling

During your initial recovery phase of six to eight weeks, do not shovel snow. Snow shoveling can be a very strenuous activity. It is the combination of cold air and heavy lifting which can be demanding on the heart. At your follow-up appointment with your doctor, you will need to discuss whether returning to this activity is reasonable for you.

Weather

Be cautious when exercising in extreme heat, cold, humidity or wind. It is very important to keep well hydrated when involved in a regular exercise program. In hot weather, exercise during the coolest part of the day; in cold weather, exercise during the warmest part of the day. In cold weather you may want to cover your face with a mask or scarf so that air entering your lungs is warmed.

Illness- Stress

Exercise at lower intensity when you are recovering from an illness such as a cold or flu, or under significant emotional stress. Ease back into your program after you are feeling better.

Returning to Work

Please check with your doctor.

Warning signs and symptoms

Listen to your body! It will tell you when you're pushing too hard and when you need to slow down or stop and rest.

Onset of any of the following signs or symptoms should be warning signals for you to stop your activity. If any symptoms persist or become more extreme, and are not relieved by resting or taking your prescribed nitroglycerin, call your doctor or call for help.

- Chest pain, or pain in jaw, neck, arms, shoulders or back
- Lightheadedness, dizziness
- Unusual or increased shortness of breath
- Excessive fatigue
- Sweating with cold, clammy skin
- Nausea or vomiting
- Palpitations or pulse irregularity

The Next Steps: Progressive Exercise Guidelines

A progressive exercise program is important during your recovery. To maintain optimal health benefits from an exercise program, a commitment to regular, long-term exercise is necessary. It should and can become a routine part of your life. Your goals can be achieved on a daily or weekly schedule. A daily program is best, with a goal of 30 minutes of exercise five times per week (or 150 minutes per week) once you build your strength, endurance and intensity of exercise.

After discharge, continue to increase the exercise and walking you were doing in the hospital. Follow the guidelines below to help you gradually progress with your exercise program.

If you are able to walk/exercise for:

- 5-10 minutes, then exercise four to five times daily
- 10-15 minutes, then exercise three times daily
- 15-20 minutes, then exercise two times daily
- 20-30 minutes, then exercise once per day

If you have exercise equipment at home such as a treadmill or bike, please discuss the use of this equipment with the Cardiac Rehab staff.

Warm up

- Start with a three to five minute warm-up.
- Warming up raises your heart rate slowly and loosens your muscles.

Cool Down

- It is also important to take three to five minutes to cool down after exercise.
- This allows your heart rate and blood pressure to gradually return to normal.

Use the exercises at the end of this section for warm up and cool down, flexibility and/or strengthening.

Strength training

Strength training is important in helping you maintain or increase muscular strength, tone, endurance and function. Strength training is safe and effective for people with heart disease when there is supervision. You will begin a strength-training program in the outpatient cardiac rehab program.

Taking your pulse/heart rate

(Resting Heart Rate Range = 60 to 100 beats per minute)

No **one** number for pulse rate can be considered normal for every individual. Your heart rate will vary depending on your activity and medications that you are taking

Each time your heart beats, a pulse can be felt at your wrist (palm up, below your thumb at the wrist). Apply light pressure with your middle and index finger while locating your pulse. Don't use your thumb, since it also has a pulse. Excessive pressure may obstruct the blood flow and you will not be able to feel your pulse. Count the number of beats you feel in ten seconds. Multiply that number by six. This will be your heart rate for one minute.

10 Second Heart Rate Chart	
Number of beats in 10 seconds	One minute heart rate
9	54
10	60
11	66
12	72
13	78
14	84
15	90
16	96
17	102
18	108
19	114
20	120
21	126
22	132
23	138
24	144
25	150
26	156

If your heart rate at rest exceeds 110 beats per minute or is lower than 40 beats per minute, you need to contact your doctor!

Medications

- Certain medications will affect your body's response to exercise, including your heart rate, blood pressure, and your exercise tolerance. These effects will be talked about further in the outpatient cardiac rehab program.

Basic Guidelines for People With Diabetes

- Check blood sugars before and after exercise. Exercise usually reduces your blood sugar both during and after exercise, therefore you may need to eat a snack before exercise or decrease your insulin dose. There is, however, an exception to this rule; if your blood sugar before exercise is greater than 250, it may continue to rise with activity.
- Exercise at the same time each day.
- Wear a medic alert tag, natural fiber socks and well-fitting shoes.
- Eat a snack for every 30 minutes of exercise and always carry a source of carbohydrate.
- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and hyperglycemia (high blood sugar) and what you should do in each situation.

Exercises You can Do

See PDF sent with – Allen has these pictures.