

## Physical Activity

Many Americans live sedentary (inactive) lives. Not only does physical activity make you look and feel better, it improves your overall well-being. Exercising increases your physical strength and stamina and also improves your circulation and the performance of your heart and lungs. Just like any other muscle, the heart gets stronger with exercise. Regular exercise may help raise HDL (“good” cholesterol) levels.

Many forms of exercise can make your heart healthier. There are three different forms of exercise:



1. Overall Physical Activity - improves overall health and can help you prevent heart disease. Includes walking, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, and gardening.
2. Aerobic Exercise - helps build heart and lung fitness and improves stamina. Includes running, swimming, or anything that increases your heart rate for an extended time.
3. Strength-Building Exercise - helps build muscle fitness and strength. Includes muscle conditioning and strength-building exercises such as using weights or elastic bands. This is important for overall fitness but should be done in addition to frequent aerobic exercise.

### Goals:

Accumulate a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate intensity\* physical activity (e.g. brisk walking) on most, and preferably all days of the week.

\*Moderate intensity physical activity includes activities that use large muscle groups and are at least equivalent to brisk walking. In addition to walking, activities may include swimming, cycling, dancing, gardening and yard work, and various domestic and occupational activities.

*This resource provides brief, general information about this health care topic. It does not take the place of the instructions you receive from your health care providers. Discuss the risks and benefits of therapies with your doctor and always take medication as prescribed. For answers to other questions talk to your health care provider.*

**For more information or a referral, please call the NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital Preventive Cardiology Program at (212) 305-4866 or visit our website at:**

<http://www.hearthealthtimes.com>.



### How To Measure Heart Rate:

Measuring heart rate gives you a good idea of how hard you are working. The target heart rate indicates a range of heart rates that allow for safe and effective exercise.

To calculate your target heart rate (THR):

1. First, determine your maximum heart rate (MHR). A good approximation is 220 - your age. Therefore, if you are 40 years old, then:  $220 - 40 = 180$ .

2. When starting out, you should exercise at a target heart rate (THR), which is equal to about 70% of your MHR.

$$180 \times 0.7 = 126.$$

$$180 = \text{MHR} - \text{age}$$

$$0.7 = 70\% \text{ of this value}$$

THR (70% of MHR) = 126 beats/minute. This is approximately 21 beats per 10 seconds.

NOTE: Usually, you measure your heart rate for just 10 seconds after exercise. Consult the chart below to see what your heart rate should be when exercising at a target heart rate.

#### Target heart rate zones

| Age (Years) | Heart Rate (Beats per 10 seconds) |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 20 – 29     | 20-23                             |
| 30 – 39     | 19-22                             |
| 40 – 49     | 18-21                             |
| 50 – 59     | 17-20                             |
| 60 – 70     | 16-19                             |
| > 70        | 15-18                             |

#### Tips for Exercising Success:

- Choose a realistic starting date to exercise. **\*After undergoing any operation, allow yourself at least four weeks before beginning any exercise program and always consult a physician prior to starting any formal exercise program.**
- Try to exercise at the same time each day so exercise becomes part of your routine.
- Keep an exercise journal with the days you exercise, how long/how much you did, and how you felt afterwards. This will help you to measure your progress.
- Choose activities that are fun, that you enjoy, and that will not bore you.
- Wear comfortable footwear and clothing.

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- Remember if you miss a day it is okay. Make up for it at some other point during the week. Do not try to double your exercise time during the next session because this could result in injury.
- Do not expect results overnight. The right kind of changes should occur gradually over the next few months.
- Remember that exercise is a lifelong commitment that will improve your overall health and help prevent heart disease. So, stick with it.
- Surround yourself with supportive people who encourage you, perhaps participate with you, and ask about your progress.
- Invest in a motivational tool such as a pedometer that can calculate distance in miles, calories burned, and steps achieved. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, walking 10,000 steps per day will help you maintain weight and prevent disease.

Ideas for exercise:

Dance, garden, swim, join a cardiac rehabilitation program, mow the lawn, bike, walk, cook, jog, jump rope, play tennis, clean your house (vacuum), walk up stairs, rake the leaves, roller skate, play soccer, walk the dog, ski, go for a hike, go to an exercise class.

#### **\*For Those With Coronary Heart Disease:**

Enrolling in a cardiac rehabilitation program is an important part of the recovery process after a cardiac event. Cardiac rehabilitation has been proven to be a safe and effective method to improve a person's exercise capacity and survival. Cardiac rehabilitation programs are an enjoyable and effective way to help you:

- Reduce the risk and severity of future heart problems.
- Gain confidence in your physical capability.
- Feel better and stronger.
- Learn how to manage stress.
- Understand the role of nutrition in heart health.

Traditional cardiac rehabilitation programs:

- Are generally recommended by doctors for those who have recently experienced a cardiac event and should begin a cardiac rehabilitation program no sooner than 4-6 weeks after an event (unless cardiac rehabilitation is contraindicated).
- Are physician-directed programs that combine individualized exercise with educational activities to promote good heart health.
- Provide patients with individually tailored and carefully supervised training, in addition to nutritional counseling, stress management, and lifestyle education.
- Generally consist of 3 sessions per week for a 12-week period.

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Formal comprehensive cardiac rehabilitation is a well-established method of preventing a recurrent cardiac event. Despite its known benefits, many patients have barriers to enrolling in formal programs. Therefore, modified and home-based programs have been developed. However, their efficacy is less well established. Speak to your doctor about what type of cardiac rehabilitation program is best for you and when you should begin.

**Goals:**

- Enroll in a formal cardiac rehabilitation program or a physician-directed home or community-based program.
- Engage in moderate-intensity physical activity for at least 30 minutes per day, 3 days per week.

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