



# Exercising with coronary artery disease

## Every move counts

Move more and reduce your sedentary time each day by incorporating different types of movement. It is never too late to start, some is always better than none!

## How to get started

Regular exercise reduces your risk of heart disease, some cancers, hypertension, stroke, obesity and type 2 diabetes. Exercise lowers your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar and helps you maintain and control a healthy weight.

Exercise is an essential treatment and reduces your overall risk of death by at least 20%. Your doctor or healthcare provider will assist you with accessing cardiac rehabilitation services and provide exercise advice and access to suitable activities and cardiac rehabilitation programs.

Ask your doctor or healthcare provider for information on exercising safely and effectively at home or in a non-hospital environment.

**Take all medicines as recommended by your doctor or pharmacist.**

## Warm up and cool down

**Always start your exercise session with a 10–15-minute warm up to loosen up the muscles and raise the heart rate safely.** Warm-up exercises include dynamic stretches, range-of-motion activities and low intensity movements. This can be done standing up, walking around, marching on the spot or seated.

**Always end your exercise session with a 10–15-minute cool-down to ensure your heart rate and breathing rate return to normal safely.** Cool down exercises include slowly decreasing the intensity of your activity and simple stretches. **Avoid any lying down exercises for at least 15 minutes after you finish your cool down.**

## Be active

### Some is good, more is better

<b>How much:</b>	Aim for at least <b>150-300</b> minutes a week of moderate intensity or at least <b>75-150</b> minutes a week of vigorous intensity physical activity. Start moving more each day increasing to regular movement every day and add sessions as your strength and stamina improve.
<b>How hard:</b>	Any movement helps. Aim for moderate to vigorous intensity—aim to get slightly breathless. Take frequent breaks, if necessary. Stop exercising if you start to feel unwell or experience any angina, laboured breathing, extreme fatigue or chest pain. Always follow your healthcare action plan in this situation and take your prescribed medicines, such as short acting nitrates, as agreed with your doctor. Ensure emergency personnel can be contacted quickly, as instructed.
<b>How long:</b>	Aim to spread out sessions throughout the week. If your fitness level is low, start with 5–10 minute sessions and add 10-minute intervals until you can comfortably exercise for longer.

<b>What type:</b>	All physical activity counts. Try activities within your abilities: walking, cycling, jogging, dancing, swimming, water aerobics, hiking – choose something you enjoy! Recreational team sports such as soccer, tennis or volleyball are great social activities too! Household activities such as cleaning, vacuuming or walking your dog are great activities for your health. These activities all use large muscle groups that work the heart safely and effectively. Regular brisk walking is a safe and easy way to significantly improve your cardiovascular health!
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### What will it do for me?

*Exercise strengthens the heart and lungs and improves your body's ability to use oxygen.*

## Build strength

<b>How much:</b>	At least twice a week.
<b>How hard:</b>	Start with light muscle strengthening exercises and progress to moderate or greater intensities over time. Move in a slow, controlled speed through a full range of motion. Take frequent breaks, if necessary. Do not lift weights over the shoulder level or over-grip equipment as both can increase your blood pressure.
<b>How long:</b>	Choose 8–10 exercises targeting the upper and lower body and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Try 1–3 sets of each exercise.
<b>What type:</b>	A variety of strength exercises using free weights, resistance machines or household items such as a can of beans or a weighted water bottle as a weight. Fun strength exercises can be done at home, outdoors or at the gym. Exercises such as side and front arm raises, arm curls and side and back leg raises require little or no equipment. Choose exercises that keep your feet moving as this helps encourage blood flow.

### What will it do for me?

*Strength training helps to keep bones, muscles and joints healthy. Strength training while keeping your legs moving helps you to exercise your heart and lungs safely and effectively.*

## Improve balance

<b>How much:</b>	At least three days a week.
<b>How hard:</b>	Try 2–3 balance exercises and repeat each exercise 10-15 times.
<b>How long:</b>	Hold each balance for 10 seconds.
<b>What type:</b>	Try yoga, Tai Chi, or simple home balance exercises. Balance exercise can be done standing up using a chair, against a wall or sitting down. Ensure the area you are exercising in and the type of balance exercise is safe. If you are at high risk of falling, use a chair support.

### What will it do for me?

*Practicing balance exercises helps to train your body to react more quickly to a loss of balance and can help reduce the risk of falls, fractures and injuries.*



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## Sedentary living

**Reduce the amount of time being sedentary.** Move more and break up sedentary time. Sedentary behavior is defined as time spent sitting or lying with low energy expenditure, while awake in the context of occupational, educational, home and community settings, and travel. Higher amounts of sedentary behavior can increase the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

**Replace sedentary behavior with more physical activity of any intensity (including light intensity).** It is possible to avoid sedentary behaviour and be physically active while sitting or lying, through, for example, upper body led activities, inclusive and/or wheelchair-specific sport and activities. Try seated stretches for those with limited mobility; using active forms of transport; standing while working (within your abilities and environment), and other accessible active options to replace sedentary time.

## Your exercise, your way!

Choose activities that are easy to start with, and that you enjoy. Always exercise within your abilities. If mobility is difficult, adapted cycling, swimming and chair-based exercises may be better alternatives. Exercise with friends and family or join a group class to improve your motivation levels and engage in social activities. Try exercising both indoors and outdoors and see which you prefer! Most importantly: **some physical activity is better than none.**

## Helpful resources

The Heart and Stroke Foundation gives great tips to stay active. <https://www.heartandstroke.ca/healthy-living/stayactive>

For more information on cardiac rehabilitation services, contact your local healthcare provider. Details can be found here. <http://www.heartandstroke.ca/servicesandresources/rehabilitation>

## Exercise safety

Exercise is contraindicated and should be avoided if you have any of the following health problems:

- unstable angina
- unstable or acute heart failure
- unstable diabetes
- new or uncontrolled heart rhythm disturbances
- resting or uncontrolled tachycardia where your resting heart is above 100 beats per minute
- uncontrolled hypertension where your systolic blood pressure is greater than 180 mmHg or your diastolic is greater than 100 mmHg
- hypotension causing symptoms such as dizziness or fainting
- an illness with a temperature and/or feel unwell

Avoid any lying down exercises for at least 15 minutes after you finish your cool down.

Start with shorter sessions (e.g. 10–15 minutes) and slowly build up to the recommended level.

Aim to get slightly out of breath, but exercise sensibly and stop the activity if you feel unwell.

Take frequent breaks if necessary and drink water before, during and after exercise.

Ensure you exercise safely during all exercises and ask for assistance and supervision if you are unsure about any exercises.

Choose environments that you can access freely and safely. Choose routes with resting places. Please ask your healthcare provider or local leisure organizations for advice on the best option for you.

Please ask your healthcare provider for information on modification or adaption for exercises within your abilities.

Scan for more physical activity resources!

