



Exercising with valvular 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 significantly reduces your risk of heart disease, stroke, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, obesity, falls and osteoporosis. It helps lower your cholesterol and blood pressure, which in turn helps to prevent and treat other types of heart disease. Exercise also helps control and maintain a healthy weight and may help manage stress and improve levels of anxiety and depression. Though regular exercise can't improve the mechanical function of a valve, it can improve your ability to enjoy the activities of daily living, including work and leisure time with friends and family.

Discuss with your doctor, healthcare provider or cardiac rehabilitation specialist how you can increase your physical activity safely and effectively to maximize the benefits to your overall health. Ensure any other disease conditions you may have are taken into consideration when developing and following an exercise plan.

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.

Be active

Some is good, more is better

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| How much: | Aim for at least 150 – 300 minutes a week of moderate intensity or at least 75–150 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. |
| How hard: | Any movement helps. Aim for low to moderate intensity— aim to get slightly breathless. Take frequent breaks, if necessary. Stop exercising if you start to feel unwell or experience angina or chest pain. |
| How long: | Aim to spread out your 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. |

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| What type: | 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, gardening, vacuuming or walking your dog are great activities for your health. |
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What will it do for me?

Regular exercise has the most benefits for your heart as it strengthens the heart and lungs and improves your body's ability to use oxygen. Over time, it can help decrease your blood pressure and improve your breathing (since your heart won't have to work as hard during exercise), so you can fully enjoy the activities of daily living. o do more!

Build strength

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| How much: | At least twice a week. |
| How hard: | Start with light muscle strengthening exercises and progress to moderate or greater intensities over time. |
| How long: | Choose 8–10 exercises targeting the upper and lower body and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Try 1–3 sets of each exercise. |
| What type: | Try weight or resistance training using light weights, resistance bands or household items. Choose fun strength exercises at home, outdoors or at the gym. Strength exercises such as wall press-ups, side and front arm raises, arm curls, side and back leg raises, chair dips and knee curls require little or no equipment. Strength exercises that keep your feet moving help encourage blood flow back to the heart. Take frequent breaks, if necessary. Avoid lifting weights over the shoulder level or over-gripping the equipment as this can increase your blood pressure. |

What will it do for me?

Strength training helps to keep bones, muscles and joints healthy and improves your ability to maintain the activities of daily living.

Improve balance

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| How much: | At least three days a week. |
| How hard: | Try 2–3 balance exercises and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. |
| How long: | Hold each balance for 10–30 seconds. |
| What type: | Try yoga, Tai Chi or home balance exercises. Always exercise safely when doing balance exercises. If you are at high risk of falling, do seated balance exercises or use a sturdy chair or wall for support, then progress to balance exercises with movement when confident. |

What will it do for me?

Practising 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.**

Exercise safety

Avoid strength training if you have significant aortic valve stenosis or pulmonary valve stenosis.

Stop exercise immediately if you experience chest pain, difficulty in breathing, angina or feel uncharacteristically unwell.

Rest and take any medicines or treatments prescribed by your doctor. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider immediately if after 15 minutes you continue to experience chest pain, laboured breathing or extreme fatigue. 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.

Always wear comfortable clothing and shoes that give good support. Take frequent breaks if necessary, and drink water before, during and after exercise.

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

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>



Scan for more
physical activity
resources!

