



Exercising with an aneurysm

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 can significantly reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes, obesity, stroke, some cancers and help relieve anxiety and depression. A safe and effective exercise plan may help improve your ability to do the activities of daily living and enjoy leisure time with friends and family.

Exercise is restricted according to the diameter of your aneurysm relative to the normal diameter of the vessel. Your doctor or surgeon will be able to advise you on a safe intensity (how hard) and duration (how long) when exercising. Ask your doctor or healthcare professional to help you develop an exercise plan to improve your cardiovascular health, reduce your risks of inactivity and improve your overall health status to suit your particular situation.

Always check with your doctor or healthcare professional before you vary your exercise plan to ensure you are exercising safely. Check with your doctor or surgeon if it is safe for you to do strength exercises.

Take all medicines as recommended by your doctor or pharmacist. See the 'Exercise safely' section at the end of this sheet for additional advice.

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

How much:	Aim for at least 150-300 minutes a week of moderate 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:	Aim for moderate intensity—aim to get slightly out of breath. Do not let your heart rate exceed 100 beats per minute. Stop any activity if you feel unwell. Do not exercise if you have a cold or flu-like illness.
How long:	Aim to spread out your session 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.

What type:	All physical activity counts. Try activities within your abilities: walking, static cycling, bowling, jogging, dancing, swimming, water aerobics, hiking—choose something you enjoy are comfortable with and does not cause any problems such as fatigue or onset of symptoms! 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?

Strength exercises help maintain and improve your ability to do daily tasks comfortably. They help maintain bone, muscle and joint health while improving strength and balance.

Build strength

How much:	At least twice a week.
How hard:	Start with light muscle strengthening exercises and progress to moderate intensities over time. Avoid lifting weights above your shoulders or over gripping the weights as both can increase your blood pressure.
How long:	Choose a variety of 8–10 exercises targeting the upper and lower body and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Do 1-3 set of each exercise.
What type:	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. Light weights and low intensity is recommended.

What will it do for me?

Strength exercises help maintain and improve your ability to do daily tasks comfortably. They help maintain bone, muscle and joint health while improving strength and balance.

Improve balance

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 seconds.
What type:	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, do seated balance exercises or exercise using a sturdy chair or wall for support. Ask for a demonstration of the exercise and/or support from your healthcare provider, family or friends.

What will it do for me?

Practising balance exercises helps to train your body to react more quickly to impending balance loss and can help reduce the risk of falls, fractures and injuries. Seated balance exercises also help train the brain to coordinate movement and improve balance.



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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. Try exercising both indoors and outdoors and see which you prefer. Most importantly: **some physical activity is better than none!**

Exercise safety

Ensure that your doctor, surgeon or healthcare provider assesses the risks and benefits of regular exercise for your particular situation, as the larger the diameter of your aneurysm relative to the normal diameter of the vessel, the more your exercise plan should be restricted.

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

Injury Canada provides tips on how to safely return to physical activity after a brain aneurysm. <https://braininjurycanada.ca/en/living-brain-injury/exercise/>

