

Exercise and Your Heart



CARDIOVASCULAR
RESOURCES
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Exercise does your heart good! Even a moderate amount of physical activity may lower your risk of heart disease.

Regular exercise helps control weight, lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol, and deal with stress. This not only helps your heart, it can increase your energy, improve your overall health, and just make you feel good!

BEFORE YOU START:

- The best type of physical activity for you is one you will enjoy doing regularly! But don't begin before talking with your health care team.
- If you have not been exercising at all, have symptoms of heart disease, or have other health conditions, some exercises may not be recommended. It is important to have a physical examination and discuss with your doctor the kind of activity best for you. Do this before you begin an exercise program.
- Plan on keeping a log—write down when you exercise, how long, and how you felt when you were done.
- Plan to make it a regular part of your week. Pick something that will fit into your daily routine.
- Pick a date to begin and do it.

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QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM OR DOCTOR:

- Can I start an exercise program?
- Do I need an exercise stress test first?
- What kinds of exercise are best for me?
- What exercises should I avoid?

WHEN YOU START:

- Buddy up! Make exercise more fun by including your friends and family.
- Join a group with the same interest as you.
- Do not compare yourself to others.
- Do not push too hard at first—start slowly. Increase exercise time and intensity gradually. Stay at the same level for at least a week before increasing it.
- Remember: You don't need to be an Olympic athlete to keep your heart healthy! You don't even need a formal exercise program. You can work some extra activity into your everyday routine, like taking the stairs when you can, parking the car farther away, and walking the dog an extra block or two.
- If you backslide and skip your exercise for a few days, don't give up – start again! It's never too late.

REMEMBER—some physical activity is better than none!

ALWAYS STOP—if you feel pain, dizziness, or shortness of breath. Call your doctor if this happens.