



Cardiac Pulmonary Rehabilitation



Lack of physical activity is a risk factor for coronary heart disease. A sedentary lifestyle is an increase in risk comparable to that for high cholesterol, high blood pressure and cigarette smoking. Significant health benefits can be obtained by including a moderate amount of physical activity to your life. A modest increase in activity (30 minutes of brisk walking or raking leaves, 15 minutes of running, or 45 minutes of playing volleyball) on most, if not all days of the week can enhance your health and quality of life.

Increasing to at least 30 minutes of daily activity levels can improve your cholesterol profile by lowering your LDLs and increasing the good cholesterol HDLs. This can be achieved a number of ways, such as a 30 minute aerobic workout, three 10 minute bouts of exercise, or an interval workout of rest and active phases that adds up to 30 minutes of active exercise. If you want to progress to a moderate level of fitness, you need to exercise for 30 to 60 minutes, on most days of the week, at 50-80 percent of your maximum capacity.

The American Heart Association and the “Just Move” initiative has website information that can assist you with developing an exercise program:

“The Benefits of Daily Physical Activity

- Reduces the risk of heart disease by improving blood circulation throughout the body
- Keeps weight under control
- Improves blood cholesterol levels
- Prevents and manages high blood pressure
- Prevents bone loss
- Boosts energy level
- Helps manage stress
- Releases tension
- Improves the ability to fall asleep quickly and sleep well
- Improves self-image
- Counters anxiety and depression and increases enthusiasm and optimism
- Increases muscle strength, increasing the ability to do other physical activities
- Provides a way to share an activity with family and friends
- Establishes good heart-healthy habits in children and counters the conditions (obesity, high blood pressure, poor cholesterol levels, poor lifestyle habits, etc.) that lead to heart attack and stroke later in life
- In older people, helps delay or prevent chronic illnesses and diseases associated with aging and maintains quality of life and independence longer
- <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200013>”

If you've been sedentary for a long time, are overweight, have a high risk of coronary heart disease or some other chronic health problem, you should see your doctor for a medical evaluation before beginning a physical activity program.

If you've been inactive, start slowly, with an additional 10 minutes of exercise every other day for the first week or two. Then add another 10 minute workout to those days you're already exercising, so you're exercising for a combined 20 minutes every other day. Do this for another week or two, before adding your third 10 minute workout. Soon, you'll be ready to add another day to your exercise regimen, and before you know it, you'll be exercising every day for 30 minutes!

If you are recovering from a coronary event or procedure, talk to your physician about appropriate exercise. A referral to a cardiac rehabilitation program may be a safe way for you to begin or resume your exercise program. Look for a program that has American Association of Cardiovascular Pulmonary Rehabilitation certification. Certification recognizes those programs rigorously reviewed by a national board and found to meet the outlined essential requirements for standards of care.