

# Home Exercise Program for Patients with Heart or Lung Conditions

## Getting started

Regular exercise should be a part of life for everyone. Exercise improves the body's tolerance to activity and work, and strengthens muscle tone and bones. It also helps to lower high blood pressure, manage stress, and lose weight. Exercise can improve one's sense of well being. Exercise will improve your heart or lung condition to keep you healthy. Slowly increasing your physical activity will restore your energy and strength.

The rehabilitation staff or your doctor will talk to you about exercising and prescribe an exercise program for you. Your exercise plan, however, depends on several factors:

- Current physical condition
- Stage in the recovery process
- Surgery or presence of any complications from your illness
- How much you exercised in the past
- Medications
- Level of activity on the job
- Personal likes and dislikes

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If there are complications, your activities will be limited until your symptoms or problems clear up. Do not exercise without instructions from your doctor or the rehabilitation staff.

## **Types of exercise**

The type of exercise you do is important because different exercises have different effects on your body. The best exercises for the heart, lungs, and circulatory system are activities that involve **continuous rhythmic motion** such as walking, cycling, running, swimming and dancing. These are called **aerobic exercise** and help increase the body's muscle tone, strength, and cardiovascular endurance. Aerobic exercises can be easily done at a low level of intensity.

Exercise that involves muscle contractions without body movement is called **isometric**. Examples of these exercises are pushing, pulling, lifting, and carrying. These exercises should be limited during your first 4 - 6 weeks of recovery and only added after talking with your doctor or rehabilitation staff. These exercises help keep muscle tone and strength, but they provide no benefit to your cardiovascular system.

During the first 4 - 6 weeks of recovery, walking and / or cycling on a stationary bicycle are recommended.

## **Intensity of exercise**

One of the purposes of exercise is to slowly increase your heart rate and breathing rates. You want to exercise hard enough to benefit your heart, but not so hard that you strain. While you are exercising you should be able to carry on a conversation, and not feel breathless.

When you first return home, your activity level should be the same as it was in the hospital. Your heart rate and/or perceived exertion (how you feel) should be used to guide or pace your exercise intensity. As your strength and stamina improve, you will be able to increase your pace without overdoing it.

## Frequency of exercise

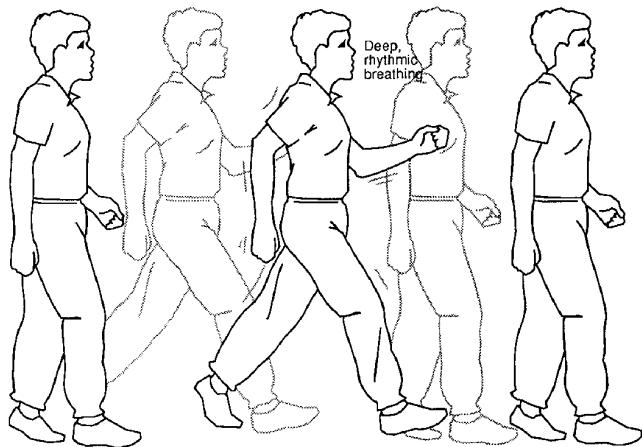
Frequency of activity is important at first. Continue with 2 to 3 short walks around the house every day. You should walk as much as you were walking in the hospital hallways. As your exercise periods become longer, you can cut down on the number of exercise sessions a day. Exercise will have no benefit for your heart unless you do it regularly, at least 3 to 5 times a week. Allow your body at least one day a week to rest.

## Duration of exercise

Start with the length of time that you were doing in the hospital. You may start by exercising for a few minutes and slowly add more time, with a goal of exercising 20 to 40 minutes.

## Warm-up

You should do warm-up exercises before beginning your exercise program. Start with 5 minutes of stretching or conditioning exercises. These will help keep your joints flexible, prevent muscle injuries, and gradually increase your heart rate before exercising. Then begin your exercise routine slowly working up to a comfortable pace.

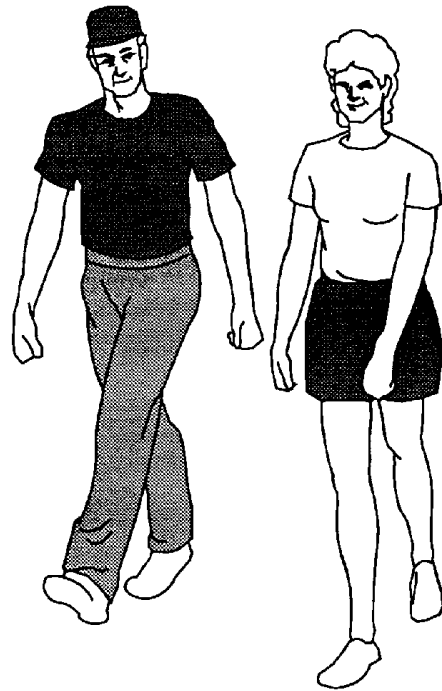


## Cool-down

It is also important to allow your heart rate and blood pressure to gradually return to a resting state. After you exercise, cool down by exercising at a slower pace for a few minutes.

## Exercise Tips

- Walk after a rest period, not when you are already tired from another activity.
- In hot and / or humid weather, exercise in the morning or evening when it is cooler. Exercising in an enclosed mall or fitness facility is a good idea when the temperature is very hot (above 85 degrees Fahrenheit).
- During cold weather, cover your nose and mouth with a scarf. Exercising in an enclosed mall or fitness facility is a good idea when the temperature is very cold (below 32 degrees Fahrenheit).
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing whenever you are exercising. Wear enough clothing to keep you warm but not overheated, especially when you are outdoors. Several light layers that you can put on or take off are more comfortable and convenient than heavy clothing.
- Try walking with friends or a family member to make your exercise program more enjoyable.



- **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).**