

LEARNING NEW *MOVES*

Regular physical activity is a powerful way to reduce your risk of heart disease. Physical activity directly helps to prevent heart problems. Staying active also helps to prevent and control high blood pressure, keep cholesterol levels healthy, and prevent and control diabetes. Plus, regular physical activity is a great way to help take off extra pounds--and keep them off. For women who have heart disease, regular, moderate physical activity lowers the risk of death from heart-related causes. If you have already had a heart attack, you still can benefit greatly from becoming more active. Many hospitals offer cardiac (heart) rehabilitation programs that include a wide range of physical activities. Ask your doctor for advice about the best program for you. Regular physical activity has a host of other health benefits. It may help to prevent cancers of the breast, uterus, and colon. Staying active also strengthens the lungs, tones the muscles, keeps the joints in good condition, improves balance, and may slow bone loss. It also helps many people sleep better, feel less depressed, cope better with stress and anxiety, and generally feel more relaxed and energetic. Women can benefit from physical activity at any age. In fact, staying active can help prevent, delay, or improve many age related disabilities. Older women in particular may benefit from weight-bearing activities, which keep bones healthier. Good weight-bearing activities include carrying groceries, walking, jogging, and lifting weights. (Start with 1- to 2-pound hand weights and gradually progress to heavier weights.)

Activities that promote flexibility and balance also are important, especially for older women. Practices such as T'ai Chi and yoga can improve balance and flexibility and can be done alternately with heart-healthy physical activities. Check with your local recreation center, YWCA or YMCA, or adult-education program for low-cost classes in your area.

A Little Activity Goes a Long Way

The good news is that to reap benefits from physical activity, you don't have to run a marathon-or anything close to it. In fact, you need only do about 30 minutes of moderate activity on most, and preferably all, days of the week. Brisk walking (3-4 miles per hour) is an easy way to help keep

your heart healthy. One study, for example, showed that regular, brisk walking reduced women's risk of heart attack by the same amount as more vigorous exercise, such as jogging. To make regular activity a pleasure rather than a chore, choose activities you enjoy. Ride your bike. Go hiking. Dance. Golf. Swim. And keep doing physical tasks around the house and yard. Trim your

hedges with hand clippers. Rake leaves. Climb stairs. Mulch your garden. Paint a room.

You can do an activity for 30 minutes at one time, or choose shorter periods of at least 10 minutes each. For example, you could spend 10 minutes walking on your lunch break, another

10 minutes raking leaves in the backyard, and another 10 minutes lifting weights. The important thing is to total about 30 minutes of activity each day.

If you haven't been physically active for some time, don't let that stop you. Start slowly and gradually increase to the recommended goal. For example, if you want to begin walking regularly, begin with a 10-15 minute walk three times a week. As you become more fit, you can increase the number of sessions until you're doing something every day. Gradually, lengthen each walking session and quicken your pace. Before long, you will have reached your heart healthy goal--walking briskly for at least 30 minutes on most or all days of the week. (See "A Sample Walking Program" on page __.)

Making Opportunities

Getting regular physical activity can be easy-especially if you take advantage of everyday opportunities to move around. For example:

- ♥ Use stairs-both up and down--instead of elevators. Start with one flight of stairs and gradually build up to more.
- ♥ Park a few blocks from the office or store and walk the rest of the way. If you take public transportation, get off a stop or two early and walk a few blocks.
- ♥ Instead of eating that rich dessert or extra snack, take a brisk stroll around the neighborhood.
- ♥ Do housework, such as vacuuming, at a brisker pace.
- ♥ Walk around the airport, train or bus station rather than sitting and waiting.
- ♥ Keep moving while you watch TV-lift hand weights, do some gentle stretching, or pedal an exercise bike.
- ♥ Take a movement break in the middle of the day. Get up and stretch, walk around, and give your muscles and mind a chance to relax.

Safe Moves

Some people should get medical advice before starting regular physical activity. Check with your doctor if you:

- ♥ Are over 50 years old and not used to moderately energetic activity.

The Healthy Heart Handbook for Women by NIH. Revised Feb 2003. PDF available at www.womensheart.org.

- ♥ Currently have heart trouble or have had a heart attack.
- ♥ Have a parent or sibling who developed heart disease at an early age.
- ♥ Have a chronic health problem, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, or obesity.

Once you get started, keep these guidelines in mind:

- ♥ Go slow. Before each activity session, allow a five-minute period of stretching and slow movement to give your muscles a chance to warm up. At the end of your activity, take another five minutes to cool down with a slower, less energetic pace.
- ♥ Listen to your body. A certain amount of stiffness is normal at first. But if you hurt a joint or pull a muscle, stop the activity for several days to avoid more serious injury. Rest and over-the-counter painkillers can heal most minor muscle and joint problems. Check the weather report.
- ♥ Dress appropriately for hot, humid days and for cold days. In all weather, drink lots of water before, during, and after physical activity.
- ♥ Pay attention to warning signals. While physical activity can strengthen your heart, some types of activity may worsen existing heart problems. Warning signals include sudden dizziness, cold sweat, paleness, fainting, or pain or pressure in your upper body just after doing a physical activity. If you notice any of these signs, call your doctor right away.
- ♥ Use caution. If you're concerned about the safety of your surroundings, pair up with a buddy for outdoor activities. Walk, bike or jog during daylight hours.
- ♥ Keep at it. Unless you have to stop your activity for a health reason, stick with it. If you feel like giving up because you think you're not going as fast or as far as you should, set smaller, short-term goals for yourself.

If you find yourself becoming bored, try doing an activity with a friend. Or switch to another activity. The tremendous health benefits of regular, moderate physical activity are well worth the effort.

No Excuses!

We all have reasons to stay inactive. But with a little thought and planning, you can overcome most obstacles to physical activity. For example:

“I don't have time to exercise.”

While physical activity does take time, you can reduce your heart disease risk by getting only 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week. Plus, you can save time by doubling up on some activities. For example, you can ride an exercise bike or use hand weights while watching TV. Or, you can transform some of your everyday chores-like washing your car or walking the dog-into heart healthy activities by doing them more briskly than usual.

“I don't like to exercise.”

You may have bad memories of doing sit-ups or running in high school, sweating, puffing, and panting. Now we know that you can get plenty of gain without pain. Activities you already do, such as gardening or walking, can improve your health. So just do more of the activities you like.

“I don't have the energy to be more active.”

Get active first--and watch your energy soar. Once you begin regular physical activity, you will almost certainly feel stronger and more vigorous. As you progress, daily tasks will seem easier.

“I keep forgetting to exercise.”

Leave your sneakers near the door to remind yourself to walk, or bring a change of clothes to work and head straight for the gym, yoga class or walking trail on the way home. Put a note on your calendar to remind yourself to exercise. While you're at it, get in the habit of adding more activity to your daily routine.

Activity	Calories Burned Per Hour*
Walking, 2 mph	240
Walking, 3 mph	320
Walking, 4.5 mph	440
Bicycling, 6 mph	240
Bicycling, 12 mph	410
Tennis, singles	400
Swimming, 25 yds per minute	275
Swimming, 50 yds per minute	500
Hiking and backpacking	408
Cross-country skiing	700
Jumping rope	750
Jogging, 5.5 mph	740
Jogging, 7 mph	920

**For a healthy, 150-pound woman. A lighter person burns fewer calories; a heavier person burns more.*

A SAMPLE WALKING PROGRAM

Warm Up Activity Cool Down Total Time

Week 1

Session A

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 5 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 15 min.

Session B-Repeat above pattern.

Session C-Repeat above pattern.

Continue with at least three exercise sessions during each week of the program.

Week 2

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 7 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 17 min.

Week 3

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 9 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 19 min.

Week 4

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 11 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 21 min.

Week 5

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 13 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 23 min.

Week 6

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 15 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 25 min.

Week 7

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 18 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 28 min.

Week 8

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 20 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 30 min.

Week 9

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 23 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 33 min.

Week 10

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 26 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 36 min.

Week 11

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 28 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 38 min.

Week 12 on:

Walk slowly 5 min. Walk briskly 30 min. Walk slowly 5 min. 40 min