

Exercise and Heart Disease

Exercise is one of the best things people with heart disease can do to prevent a heart attack, stroke, or cardiovascular procedure.

Your heart is a muscle. And like other muscles, it needs to be worked in order to stay strong. The best way to work your heart is with exercise.

If you are not physically active you have an increased risk of gaining weight. And if you have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, you are less likely to stay in control of these risk factors.

The American Heart Association recommends you get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise every week to protect your heart.

If you are trying to lose weight, you may need to exercise more than that and change your diet.

Talk to your healthcare team about how much exercise you need and safe ways you can become more active.

You may not be able to start exercising for long periods of time right away. Gradually increase the amount of activity you do, and the intensity.

When I first started working out because of the excessive weight I just would walk for five to maybe seven minutes and that would be enough to where I was sore, I was winded, and I just couldn't do any more.

Start with 10 minutes the first week, and then build to 20 minutes the next.

After maybe a month I noticed that I was doing twice as much; after two months I noticed I was doing maybe four times as much.

Set specific goals for your individual ability with your healthcare provider before you start.

Choose aerobic activities that you enjoy and can do, like swimming, biking, or walking.

If you have had a heart event, procedure, or surgery, your healthcare provider may recommend a cardiac rehabilitation program.

In cardiac rehab, you'll exercise in a monitored setting, while learning more about how to reduce your risk of future heart problems.

At Cardiac Rehab you make new friends. There are people in your situation, or people who are- didn't have it quite as bad as you. There are people who are worse than you. There's a good feeling about being around people in similar situations, that- that you have a camaraderie you build up, a friendship you build up, just talking about your situation, talking about theirs, and how- how they're recuperating and how you're recovering and stuff.

Whether it's in a structured program or on your own, physical activity should be a regular part of your life. Choosing a variety of activities can keep your routine interesting and give your body a more complete workout by working many muscle groups.

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A lot of us feel like we don't have the time to exercise. But once you find an activity you enjoy, schedule it into your calendar like an appointment.

I'm taking longer walks and doing a lot of other things, a bunch of exercise. I don't feel tired at all.

I have a Fitbit, and it's wonderful when it-- when I get to 10,000 steps, and it vibrates on my arm. And that's very self-motivating, because you try to aim to do more.

However, or whenever you exercise, remember increasing your activity level can help lower your risk for almost every controllable risk factor.

It can help you reach a healthy weight, relieve stress, lower your blood pressure. Just one lifestyle change can affect so many risk factors.

I also notice now that it relieves a lot of stress, the endorphins. I feel more relaxed and I tend to get a better night's sleep usually.

What you can accomplish with regular exercise may surprise, delight and reassure you.