

## **Exercising for a Health Heart**

### **Introduction**

Because of advances in medicine and technology, people with heart disease are living longer, more productive lives than ever before, BUT prevention is still the best weapon in the fight against heart disease. By living a healthier life, you could delay heart disease for years or minimize its damage. Exercise is one part of a healthier life.

### **Objectives**

Participants will learn:

- The importance of physical activity to a healthy life
- How to exercise
- How to incorporate physical activity in their daily routines

### **Get Moving and Maintain a Healthy Weight**

Exercise improves the heart function, lowers blood pressure and blood cholesterol, and boosts energy. Being overweight forces the heart to work harder. About one in four U. S. adults are sedentary.

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. The 30 minutes of physical activity does not have to be done at one time, but can be done in 10-minute intervals throughout the day.

Ann Bolger, M.D., a spokeswoman for the American Heart Association and a cardiologist in San Francisco says, “Exercising is like taking the pennies from under the couch cushions and putting them into your piggybank. Every little bit counts.”

Vigorous exercise like running or doing aerobics brings more health benefits than lighter intensity activities, but walking is a great form of exercise. Brisk walking can get your heart rate up and give you a solid workout. Walking at a comfortable pace can work well for many people, too. “The best exercise is the one you feel good about and can do over and over again,” says Bolger. The type of exercise needs to be one that you can fit into your everyday routine.

Before starting any type of exercise program, you need to check with your doctor. These people need to see a doctor before starting an exercise program.

- Have heart trouble or have had a heart attack.
- Take medicine for high blood pressure or a heart condition.
- Are over 40 years old if you are a man, or over 50 if you are a woman, and you want to do harder activity, like jogging.
- Have more than one risk factor, like high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes, overweight, or smoking.

- Have a family history of heart disease at an early age (before the age of 45 for men and 55 for women).

Children need to be taught at an early age that exercise is fun and good for them. Families can walk together and/or ride bikes in the park or neighborhood. Adults have to set the example for them.

### **Why Exercise?**

Research has shown that exercise can:

- Give you a feeling of well being
- Give you a positive self image
- Improve mental and physical performance
- Reduce stress and tension
- Allow you to get a better night's sleep
- Reduce depression
- Get rid of excess food energy that can be stored as fat—helps you lose weight and maintain a healthy weight
- Help you feel better about yourself
- Give you more energy
- Help to lower blood pressure
- Help to lower blood cholesterol
- Help lower your chance for diabetes
- Strengthen your heart and lungs

### **How to Exercise**

When beginning any exercise routine, it is best to start out with stretching and strengthening exercises; move slowly without bouncing or jerking. If you use rapid or jerky movements, you can injure a muscle.

All physical activity helps the heart. Start slowly, and then move to higher levels of activity. For example, you can start by walking and then move to jogging or doing aerobics. You don't have to become an athlete to be physically fit—JUST KEEP MOVING!!!!

The movements should be slow and deliberate. You should build up slowly the number of repetitions so that you don't become too sore or injure yourself and get discouraged from exercising.

**STOP If... you begin to experience pain in your upper arm, throat, or chest. This is a signal to stop immediately and rest your head between your knees or, if possible, lie down with your feet elevated. Other symptoms that should be a signal to stop exercising are dizziness, fainting, loss of coordination, or breaking out into a cold sweat. If any of these symptoms occur, see a physician as soon as possible.**

When exercising, remember to breathe. Before you begin your exercise program, start with some deep breathing for about 5 minutes. For deep breathing exercises, start by standing or sitting tall,

with shoulders back, arms at your sides, stomach pulled in. Take a deep breath, hold for a count of 3 and then let the breath out SLOWLY, a little at a time. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Remember to:

- Breathe deep-in and out when exercising
- Move slowly and deliberately
- Start out easy and work up as you gain more stamina
- Drink plenty of fluids before and after exercising, even if you are not thirsty. Drink water. Special sports drinks are not needed. (They contain sugar.)
- Wear comfortable clothing. Wear shoes and socks that give your feet support.
- Keep the elbows and knees slightly bent when exercising so that you don't put extra stress on the joints
- Always warm up before you start your exercise routine-to get your heart rate up
- Always cool down at the end of your exercise routine-to lower your heart rate

**NEVER** wrap your body in plastic or wear clothing that is too heavy. This will not help you lose fat, but it can make you:

- Sweat too much
- Make your body temperature rise
- Make your heart beat too fast
- Make you sick to your stomach
- Cause you to pass out
- Cause damage to your organs

When walking for exercise, make sure that you use the proper form.

- Foot strike-1) Heel, 2) ball of foot, 3) push off with toes.
- Arm movement-elbows bent with hands slightly above your waist, swinging straight ahead with each stride. Shake your hands every once and a while to keep circulation from being slowed down. Keeping your arms up helps relieve strain on the heart muscle and helps your circulation, especially in your arms and hands.
- Breathing-establish your own pattern of breathing such as breathing in and out through the nose or mouth-Breath in with the left foot and out with the right foot.

Brisk walking is good physical activity because you can walk indoors or outside in your neighborhood, at the mall, at a school, or churchyard. It is easy to do and you do not need any special equipment-just a good pair of shoes for support and socks for cushioning.

### **Finding Time to be Physically Active**

Everyone has busy schedules, so finding time to be physically active can be a challenge. Let's look at some ways we can fit physical activity into our daily lives.

- Take a 15 to 20 minute walk during lunch at work or after we get home
- Jump rope a few minutes each day. Work up to jumping for 10 minutes.
- Get off the bus one or two stops early and walk.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.

- Park farther away from the front door at work or when shopping.
- Dance to your favorite music.
- Leave a pair of walking shoes in the car.
- Set a date and time to walk with a friend, family member, or coworker.

### **Activity:**

1. Put on some music and do the stretching exercise
2. Take a brisk 15 to 20 minute walk.
3. Walk slowly for 5 minutes.
4. Walk briskly for 5-10 minutes
5. Walk slowly for last 5 minutes
6. Do some stretches to loosen the muscles and cool-down

### **Keeping Motivated**

One of the hardest parts of being more active is staying motivated. Many people find that having a partner helps them to stay active because:

- You motivate each other. You can set goals together and help each other meet them.
- It makes the time go by faster. You will focus on talking rather than on the activity.
- A partner can be a family member, neighbor, or friend.

### **Handouts**

- **How to Exercise**
- **Stretching Exercises**
- **Make Physical Activity a Habit: My Personal Record**
- **Sample Walking Program**

Materials adapted from: Your Heart, Your Life Curriculum, NIH Publication No. 02-3674; How to Keep Your Heart Healthy, FDA Consumer Magazine, November-December,2003; and Shape Up While You Slim Up, Publication No. HE-0279.