

# Chapter 5: Exercise and Activity

## Benefits of Regular Exercise

### Tip

Never start an exercise program before talking with your health care provider.

Regular exercise is important to strengthen your muscles, including your heart.

If you are new to exercise, getting into an exercise routine can be a challenge. Stick with it! After a few days or weeks you may begin to see or feel these positive changes:

- more confidence and independence
- more energy to do your everyday activities
- less difficulty reducing or maintaining weight
- more strength and endurance
- increased flexibility and balance
- more energy to participate in special events
- improved feeling of well-being and a reduction in stress
- better quality sleep.

## Basic Exercise Guidelines

### Tip

If you skip more than 2 days of exercise, restart your program at a lower level and slowly increase again.

Start your exercise program slowly. Choose an exercise you enjoy, such as walking, riding a stationary bike, swimming or gardening. If you can tolerate exercise, slowly increase what you are doing by adding one minute each day.

Use the following general exercise guidelines.

- Wear layers of loose-fitting clothing. Wear comfortable athletic shoes.
- Wait up to 2 hours after eating a full meal and after taking most medicines to exercise.
- Do your exercising in comfortable temperatures. If the weather is too hot or cold, exercise indoors.
- Warm up for 5 to 10 minutes until low-level activity slowly raises your heart rate.
- Drink 6 to 8 ounces of water before you exercise unless you are on a fluid restriction.
- Stretch in slow, controlled movements that extend your muscle fibers and put your joints through their full range of motion. (Do not bounce while you stretch.)

## Tip

Check with your health care provider to see if any of your heart medicine could have an effect on your heart rate.

- Do aerobic exercise that uses large muscle groups nonstop and raises your heart rate (like biking, walking and swimming).
- At the end of your workout, do low-level activity and stretching that slowly allows your heart rate to return to normal and helps you cool down.
- Drink 6 to 8 ounces of water after you exercise unless you are on a fluid restriction.
- Do not exercise if you are not feeling well (such as a cold, the flu or a temperature higher than 100 F).
- If you smoke, quit! Your doctor, nurse or case manager can give you information on quitting smoking. If you cannot quit, do not smoke 1 hour before or after you exercise.
- Do not take a hot or cold shower or bath for at least 15 minutes before or after exercise.
- Do not drink alcohol right before or after exercise.
- Avoid exercises that involve straining, pushing, pulling or heavy lifting when there is little or no movement of your body or if you have to hold your breath.
- Be careful of exercises in which both arms are above your head for a long time. This can lead to fatigue.

## Good Exercise Choices

- Choose exercise that is low impact with light to moderate intensity.
- Walking is the best choice because it is easy to do. If your locations to walk are limited, you may use a treadmill.
- A stationary bicycle may put less stress on your hips, knees and feet. Be sure your seat is the proper height. Your knees should only be slightly bent when the pedal is at the lowest point.
- Swimming puts less stress on your joints.

If you can, you may want to do 2 or 3 different types of exercise each week for variety.

## How to Breathe While You Exercise

You may find yourself short of breath while you are exercising. Some of this is normal. You can rate your level of breathlessness on this scale:

1. mild (noticeable only to you)
2. mild difficulty (noticeable to someone else)
3. moderate difficulty (you can keep exercising)
4. severe difficulty (you cannot keep exercising).

You should stay within the first two on the scale. If you reach the third, you should cool down or stop if you need to catch your breath.

## Signs You Should Stop Exercising

You always need to be aware of the way your body responds to what you are doing. This will tell you if you are working at a level that is good for you. The following signs mean your body is not dealing well with exercise:

- dizzy or lightheaded feelings
- nausea and vomiting
- cold sweat
- shortness of breath that makes talking difficult
- unusual fatigue or extreme exhaustion
- feeling that your heart is pounding or racing
- fainting or black-out spells
- a feeling that your heart is skipping beats or has become irregular
- chest pain or pressure
- pain or pressure in your neck, jaw, teeth and arm or between your shoulder blades
- any new orthopedic problems, such as joint or muscle pain.

If you have any of the above symptoms, stop what you are doing and rest. If they do not go away after rest, or if they continue to limit your activity, call your health care provider.

**If these symptoms are severe, call 911 and use your nitroglycerin as directed.**

# Save Your Energy

Without even knowing it, you may be wasting energy every day. Finding easier ways to do things will give you more energy to do the things you enjoy. The following are ways to save your energy.

## Plan ahead

- Schedule time to exercise. You may find it helpful to combine exercise with another activity. For example, ride your stationary bike while you watch TV.
- Organize your home and work area. Store things where you use them.
- Plan ahead for rest. Schedule rest breaks or power naps. If you get too involved in activities that cause fatigue, try setting a timer for 30 minutes. When the timer goes off, see how you are feeling and decide if you should continue or rest.
- Use waiting time to relax. Instead of being stressed by the wait at the checkout line or in traffic, use the time to practice relaxation breathing.
- Schedule time for you. Plan time for hobbies and activities you enjoy. Lunch with a friend can reduce your stress and boost your energy.
- Plan for meals. Cooking can be simpler if you plan and prepare ahead of time. Make a double batch and freeze half for an easy meal later.
- Plan for shopping. A list will eliminate trips for forgotten items. Avoid going to the store at busy times.
- Get out of the fast lane. When possible, avoid rush hour. Schedule appointments and errands at other times.
- Stay flexible. Even the best plans may need to be changed.

## Pace yourself

- Pace yourself. Move slowly and easily. Stop and rest often. Don't rush.
- Use your energy wisely. Identify when your energy level is best and use this time to your advantage. If you get fatigued in midafternoon, try cooking and doing housework earlier in the day. Save the midafternoon for lighter activities or a nap.
- Find a balance. Don't try to do everything all in one day. Spread housework over the whole week, balancing heavy and light chores.

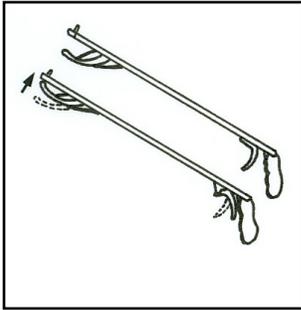
- Set reasonable goals and make them realistic. For instance, clean only one room a day or decide to just dust.
- Find shortcuts. Combine shopping trips with errands when you can. Avoid having to backtrack.
- Climb stairs safely. You may need take up to four deep breaths before you climb stairs, “double step” to use less energy, put a stool at the landing to rest, or avoid carrying heavy loads.
- Use a step stool or sturdy climbing device when you reach for an object.

### **Make priorities**

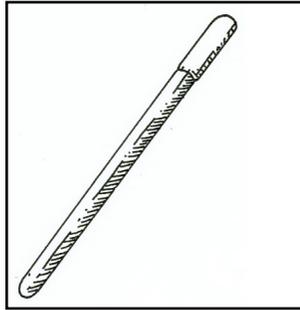
- Evaluate your priorities. What do you have to do, and what do you want to do? What can you eliminate or simplify? If you never seem to have time for the things you enjoy, maybe you need to re-evaluate priorities.
- Delegate work. Have family members (including children) help with housework. Have groceries delivered. If you can afford it, hire help. Also, your community may offer services to help with meals, transportation or chores.
- Eliminate chores that aren’t needed. Leave your bed unmade or let the dishes air dry. Use your energy to do something you want to do, instead of things you feel you have to do.
- Recognize your limits and just say “no.”
- Learn to let go. Don’t be a perfectionist. If you enjoy entertaining, have people over for dessert or potluck instead of a five-course meal. Let others help you.
- Simplify your life. Buy easy-care, wash-and-wear clothing so you won’t have to iron and hand wash items. Try a low-maintenance hairstyle.
- Make your health your No. 1 priority.
- Don’t stand when you can sit. If shaving makes you tired, put a mirror on the table. Rest your elbows. Sit on a high stool to iron or cook.

## Consider using equipment to save energy

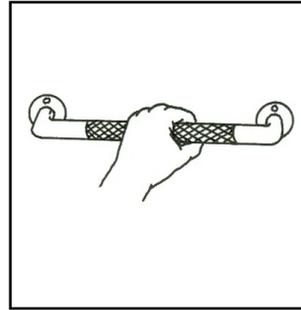
Equipment can help you save energy. You can find these items at medical supply stores, discount stores or local pharmacies. You may qualify for community equipment loan programs. For more information, call the Goodwill Easter Seal Equipment Loan Program at 651-646-2591 or your local American VFW or Lions Club.



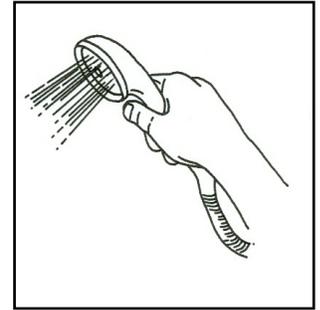
**long-handled reachers**



**long-handled shoe horn**



**grab bar for bathroom**



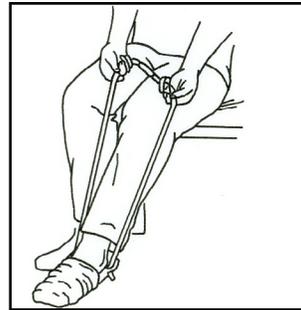
**hand-held shower kit**



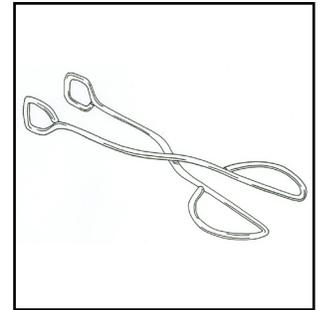
**long-handled sponge**



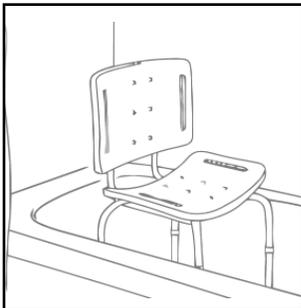
**raised toilet seat**



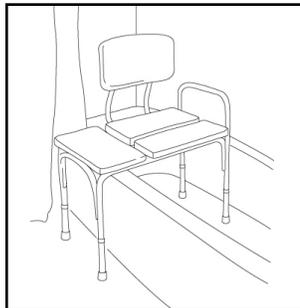
**long-handled sock aid**



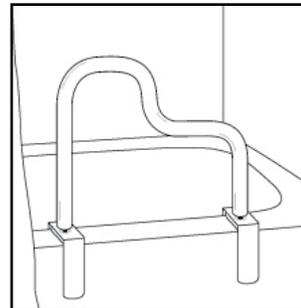
**tongs**



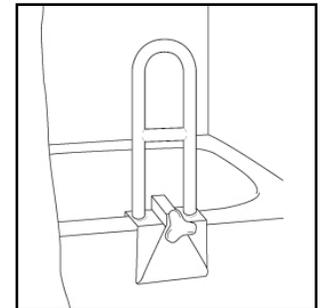
**bath/shower chair**



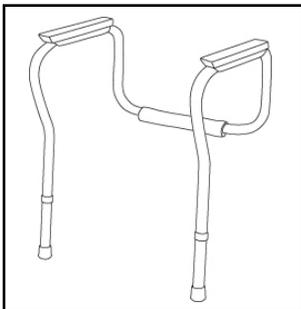
**tub transfer bench**



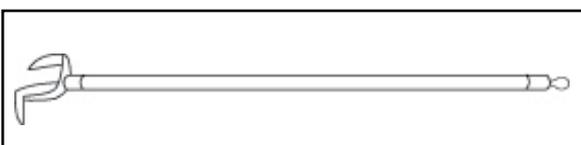
**tub rail 1**



**tub rail 2**



**toilet frame**



**dressing stick**

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## Do relaxation exercises

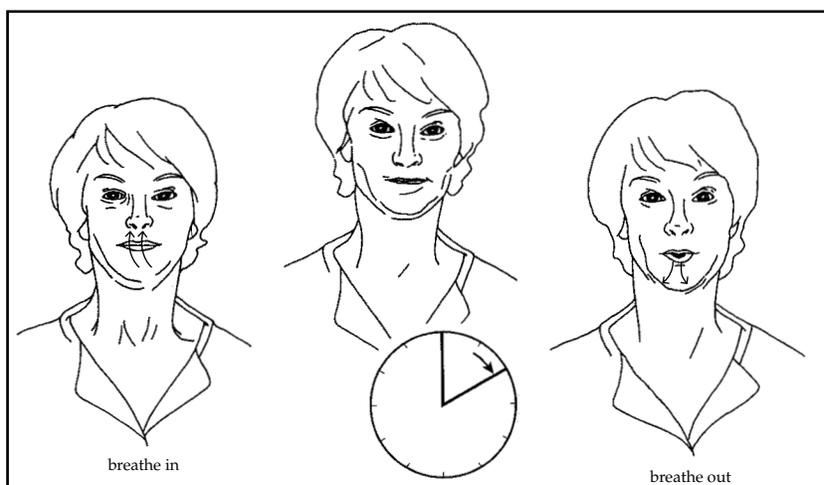
Stress — physical or emotional — can slow your body's ability to heal. When you relax, the tension in your body melts away. Just spending 20 minutes twice a day relaxing can help restore your energy.

Use the following relaxation exercises anytime you feel tense during the day. Be sure to find a quiet place, turn down the lights and close the door. Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Try to keep noise and other distractions to a minimum. You may want to play soft, soothing music during your relaxation exercises.

### ■ deep breathing

To deep breathe correctly, you must use your abdominal muscles, as well as your chest muscles.

- Breathe in through your nose as deeply as possible.
- Let your breath out through your mouth, slowly and completely.
- Rest and then repeat these steps 10 times.



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**Hold your breath for 5 seconds before breathing out.**

### ■ progressive relaxation

This exercise will allow you to focus on different body parts and give you a general feeling of relaxation.

- Lie down or sit in a comfortable chair.
- Close your eyes and think of your face muscles.
- Let them totally relax.
- Think of your neck and shoulder muscles.
- Let them totally relax.
- Repeat with each body part moving from your head to your toes. Let your body become loose and warm. Feel the tension melt away.

- **imagery**

This exercise is used to manage pain and distress, give you a better sense of well-being and help your body heal.

- Think of a pleasant or meaningful experience, or a favorite, restful place like a beach or cabin.
- Let happy thoughts and images relax you.
- Close your eyes and picture that scene or place.
- Focus on the sights, sounds and smells of your favorite scene or place as you relax.

## Sexual Activity

Sexual activity is a common concern among people who live with heart failure. Most people can enjoy sexual activity with some minor changes. You and your partner can continue to share physical closeness and emotional intimacy.

Experiment with new ways of being together. You may find pleasure in giving foot or back massages, caressing and cuddling.

Use common sense and avoid any strenuous activity if you are feeling tired or if you have just eaten. Use positions that are comfortable for you and cause you the least fatigue or exertion.

Certain medicines can affect sexual response. If you find a change in your sexual desire, talk about it with your health care provider.

The following are ways to reduce stress on your heart during sex.

- Talk to your partner about sexual activity recommendations and possible changes you may need to make.
- Enjoy sexual activity when you are rested.
- Avoid sex if you are angry, anxious or resentful.
- Be sure your room temperature is comfortable.
- Wait one to two hours after eating a meal.
- Avoid time restrictions.
- If you have been drinking alcohol, wait to have sex.
- If you have shortness of breath or chest discomfort, stop and rest.

# Your Everyday Activities

## Tip

Using good body mechanics to lift and carry reduces the strain on your heart and your back.

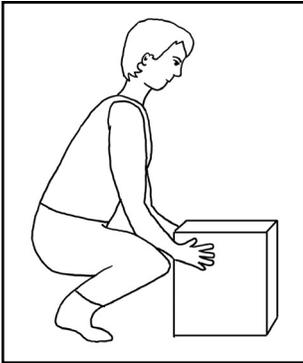


Figure A

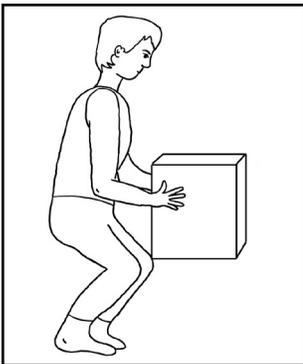


Figure B

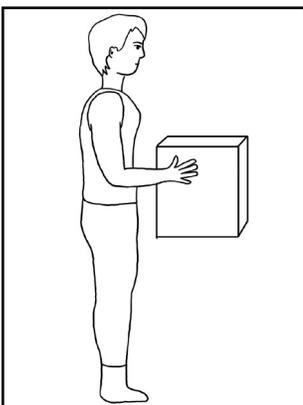


Figure C

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## Use good position and posture

- Don't stand when you can sit. If shaving makes you tired, put a mirror on the table. Rest your elbows.
- Avoid working with your arms above your shoulders for long periods of time.
- Sit on a high stool to iron or cook.
- Plan your steps. Keep a basket at the bottom of the stairs for items that must go upstairs. Make one trip instead of four.
- Use good posture. This reduces stress on your neck, back and shoulder muscles. It also lets you breathe easier.
- Change your positions. Break up your work with a stretch or a walk.
- Avoid staying in the same position for a long time. Use a purse with a shoulder strap. If you use the phone for a long time, use a speaker phone or headset.
- Avoid reaching and bending. Use lazy susans, pull-out shelves and reachers.
- Avoid lifting. Slide items or use carts.

## How to lift

- Stand as close to the object as you can with your feet spread apart (Figure A).
- Bend at your knees, keeping your back straight.
- Grasp the load firmly. Hold the load close to the center of your body and face the direction you want to walk (Figure B). This will help you avoid twisting and turning (Figure C).
- To unload, bend your knees and slide the load into place.

## How to carry

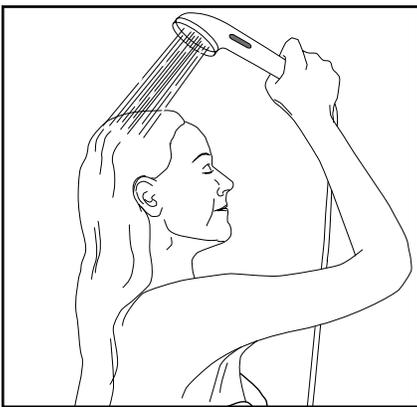
- Carry the object at waist level with your elbows slightly bent.
- Try not to carry an object on one side of your body. If you have to, set the object down once in a while.
- Try to use a rolling cart to carry heavy items.

# Personal Grooming

## How to get dressed

Every night, leave your robe and slippers (or shoes and socks) and underwear where they are easy to reach in the morning. Before getting up, do some dressing while sitting on the edge of the bed.

- Sit on a chair or the bed to finish getting dressed.
- Do not wear belts or tight clothing.
- Wear slip-on shoes. Your favorite lace-up shoes can be changed to slip-ons by using elastic shoelaces.



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**How to take a shower.**

## How to take a bath or shower

- Use a bath bench to sit on in the shower.
- Use grab bars/no-slip strips for your safety.
- Use lukewarm water instead of hot water to reduce steam and keep your muscles from becoming too relaxed.
- Use a shower extension hose or hand-held shower.
- Wrap up in a terry cloth towel or robe instead of drying yourself.
- Use oxygen in the shower if you use oxygen when you are active. Put the oxygen tubing over the shower rod to keep it out of the way.
- You can take a sponge bath instead of a tub bath. It is not necessary to get wet all over to get clean.

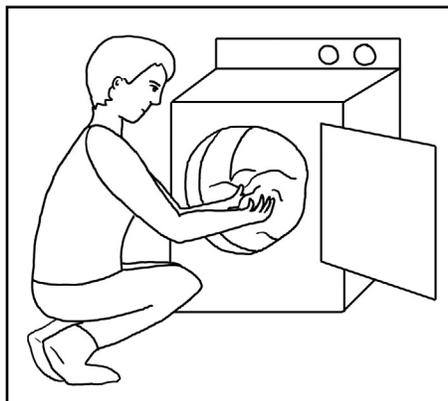
# Household Chores

## How to rearrange your kitchen

- Set up work areas so similar items are grouped together, such as dishwashing, cooking or mixing items.
- Streamline your kitchen. Throw or give away things you do not use.
- Plan meals ahead of time. Know which recipes are quick and easy or need more preparation.
- Keep a grocery list on the refrigerator.
- Shop for nonperishables once a week (or less if you have enough storage) and perishables as few times as your storage allows.
- Shop in a store that has carts which the cashier unloads.
- Let your dishes air dry.
- Sit when peeling vegetables, mixing and washing dishes.
- Use electric appliances (such as a mixer or blender) when you can.
- Prepare and freeze extra food for later use.
- Use paper napkins instead of linen.

## How to do laundry

- Sort clothes on a table and use a rolling laundry cart.
- Buy easy-care permanent press clothing.
- Sit down to iron. Place a rack next to the ironing board to hand freshly ironed clothes.
- Fold sheets, towels and underwear. Do not iron them.
- Put a front-loading washer on blocks to raise the opening and eliminate bending.

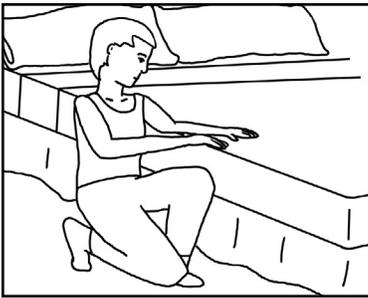


How to load and unload a washer.



How to load and unload a dryer.

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**Make one side of the bed,  
then the other.**

## **How to make the bed**

- Arrange the bed so neither side is against the wall.
- Unfold the covers on the bed. Do not shake the covers.
- Make one side of the bed completely. Then, make the other side.
- Consider not making the bed every day!

## **How to dust and clean**

- Store all of your cleaning equipment for one type of job together. For instance, keep the kitchen cleaners in the kitchen, keep dusting items together and keep bathroom cleaners in the bathroom.
- Keep small items in a carrying basket.
- Use pick-up tongs and long-handled sponges to decrease reaching.
- Use vacuum cleaner attachments to dust.
- Use long-handled dust pans.
- Sit on a tub or bedside if using a long-handled scrub sponge to clean.
- Avoid knickknacks you will have to clean.
- Keep your furnishings simple.