

Exercise and Your Risk for Heart Attack

General Information

Lack of regular aerobic exercise puts you at risk for heart disease. Exercise improves the efficiency of the heart and muscles. The heart muscle grows stronger with exercise. Even a little exercise is better than none at all.

Why You Should Exercise

If you move your body, you will feel better. Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity at least every day of the week. The American Heart Association recommends moderate activity for 30 to 60 minutes at least three to four days each week.

There are two types of exercise that can help keep you physically healthy:

- **aerobic:** Aerobic exercise is a rhythmic, repetitive activity such as walking, swimming and biking that continues for up to 30 minutes. This exercise restores a steady supply of oxygen to the muscles that are being exercised.
- **strength training:** Strength training improves your muscle strength and tone, reduces body fat and reduces pain in your low back. There are several different types of strength training: elastic bands, cuff and hand weights, free weights, wall pulleys and weight machines.

The benefits of exercise are many. Exercise:

- increases your muscle strength and flexibility
- helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints
- helps manage your weight by increasing the amount of calories burned
- lowers your risk for heart disease, colon cancer and diabetes

- helps control your blood pressure
- helps increase HDL (“good”) cholesterol
- makes you feel better
- reduces your stress
- increases self-esteem
- helps control blood glucose.

Activities You Can Do

You don't need to join a health club or buy expensive equipment. Choose activities you enjoy. For easy activity, take the steps instead of escalator or elevator, or park your car a little farther from the door when at work or shopping. Other examples include:

- going for a brisk walk or bike ride
- going for a swim
- mowing the lawn with a push mower
- jogging
- doing aerobics
- running up and down stairs
- raking the leaves
- working in the garden
- cleaning the house
- riding a stationary bike while watching TV
- playing basketball
- doing any sport you like.

Talk with your doctor about starting an exercise program if you have health problems, concerns, questions or if you are older than age 50.

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