



Basic Exercise Guidelines



be safe when you exercise

Some shortness of breath is normal. Rate your level of breathlessness on this scale:

1. mild (only you notice)
2. mild difficulty (someone else notices)
3. moderate difficulty (you can keep exercising)
4. severe difficulty (you have to stop exercising).

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.

- Some exercises may not be safe for certain types of congenital heart defects.
- Talk with members of your adult congenital heart team to determine if your exercise routine and choices are right for you.
- You should be able to do exercises that raise your heart rate (such as walking, biking and swimming).
- Even if your ability to exercise is reduced, you can still work on improving your physical fitness.
- Set realistic fitness goals. Take breaks as needed.
- Some medicines can affect your heart's response to exercise (such as beta blockers). Talk with your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions.
- Don't participate in contact sports (such as hockey or soccer) if you take an anticoagulation medicine (such as warfarin). Talk with your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions.
- Check with members of your adult congenital heart team if you can attempt any extreme sports (such as bungee jumping, scuba diving, skiing or sky diving). This is especially important if you take an anticoagulant or if you have a pacemaker or defibrillator.



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What To Know

- Start out slowly.
- Wear layers of loose-fitting clothing so you may adapt to temperature changes. Wear athletic shoes that tie.
- Wait up to 2 hours after eating a full meal and after taking most medicines to exercise.
- Warm up for 5 to 10 minutes before you exercise. Do low-level activity at the end of your exercise.
- Drink 6 to 8 ounces of water before and after you exercise unless you are on a fluid restriction.
- Avoid exercises that have you strain, push or pull. Avoid heavy lifting when there is little or no movement of your body or if you have to hold your breath.
- Don't exercise if you don't well or if you have a temperature higher than 100 F.

When To Stop Exercising

Stop exercising and call your doctor if you have or feel:

- dizzy or lightheaded
- nausea (feel like throwing up) and vomiting (throwing up)
- cold sweat
- shortness of breath that makes talking difficult
- unusual fatigue or extreme exhaustion
- fainting or black-out spells
- skipped or irregular heartbeats
- chest pain or pressure, tightness, heaviness, ache
- joint or muscle pain
- eye issues
- numbness/tingling in your arms or legs.



Check Your Heart Rate

- Find your pulse on your wrist.
- Put two fingers on the inside of your wrist just below your thumb.
- Press lightly until you feel your pulse.
- Count the heartbeats for 10 seconds. Multiply the heartbeats by 6.
- If your pulse is irregular or skips beats, count the beats for a full 60 seconds.
- The average resting rate is between 60 to 100 beats each minute.
- If your rate is higher than average, slow down and don't exercise so hard.

Remember, start your exercise program slowly and work up to your abilities.

