

Physical Therapy Department

Take Heart I

Home Activity Guidelines



Home Walking Program

General Walking Guidelines: Walking will be a very important part of your home activities program, please keep the following points in mind.

1. Walk on flat areas until your MD approves you for ramps and hills.
2. Space your activities throughout the day with rest before strenuous activity such as bathing, showering.
3. Always wait one to 1-1/2 hours after a meal to do your walking.
4. Walking by yourself is fine. If you're walking with another person, the other person should accommodate to your pace and comfort level.
5. Begin your walk with an easy 5 minute "warm-up" stroll, and end with a slow 5 minute "cool-down" stroll.
6. Walk at a pace that allows you to breathe deeply and talk with your partner without becoming excessively short of breath.
7. Walk at a comfortable pace that allows your heart rate to increase but avoid sudden sprints or sudden stops.
8. Build up your walking endurance slowly, enjoyably, and effectively with a progressive walking program approved by your MD, physical therapist or cardiac rehabilitation program. Below is a suggested walking program for the first 4 weeks after your discharge.

Suggested Progressive Walking Program

Week After Discharge	Time	Suggested Frequency	Pace: Walk at a rate approximating:*
1st week	5-10 min.	2-3 times a day	Leisurely Pace
2nd week	15-20 min.	1-2 times a day	Comfortable Pace
3rd week	25-30 min.	1-2 times a day	Comfortable Pace
4th week	30-35 min.	1 time a day	Brisker Pace

*The Pace is suggested. Not everyone can comfortably accomplish this pace. Your walking pace may vary depending upon your age, your level of conditioning, and the medications you are taking. Don't feel discouraged if your pace is different, the most important thing is to get out and walk.

You may also ride a stationary bike as part of your exercise program. Follow similar guidelines as in the walking program.

Suggested Stationary Bike Program

Week After Discharge	Time (Continuous Biking)	Suggested Frequency	Pedaling Resistance
1st week	5-10 min.	2-3 times a day	None
2nd week	15-20 min.	2-3 times a day	Mild
3rd week	20-25 min.	1-2 times a day	Mild
4th week	25-30 min.	1 time a day	*

*When you are able to bike for 30 minutes you may start gradually adding more pedaling resistance each day. Biking speed should be maintained at 10-15 miles per hour or about 60 rpm. For variety you may combine walking and biking to fulfill your required number of daily exercise sessions.

Monitoring Your Pulse

One way of monitoring your response to an activity is to take your pulse. Your pulse represents each heartbeat. You can take your pulse at your wrist for 10 seconds and multiply it by 6 to get your heart rate for one minute.

It is also important to monitor your pulse rhythm (regularity). Most people have a regular pulse. If the rhythm of your pulse becomes irregular or you notice a marked increase in skipped beats, notify your MD.

When to Take Your Pulse:

1. Before, during, and after walking or exercise.
2. When you try a new activity which may be physically stressful.
3. If chest discomfort, dizziness, or lightheadedness develop at rest or with activity, immediately check your pulse. Note if it is regular or irregular. Your MD will need this information.
4. Take your pulse every morning before rising to become familiar with your resting heart rate.

Your Heart Rate Limit Guidelines:

In general, you should not exceed your heart rate limit during exercise.

Your heart rate limit is _____ beats in 10 seconds or _____ beats per minute.

Remember These Guidelines:

1. Your heart rate limit is based on your heart rate in the hospital and is a temporary limit for the first 3-4 weeks after discharge. Check with your MD for a revised heart rate limit after 3-4 weeks.
2. If you find that you are consistently exceeding your heart rate limit during the day or during exercise, check with your MD.
3. You may be exceeding your heart rate limit due to increased activity level at home. This probably means your walking or exercise program needs revision. Check with your MD.
4. If your heart rate exceeds 120-130 beats per minute with any activity in the first 3-4 weeks after discharge, slow down your activity.

Taking Your Pulse:

beats per 10 seconds	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
heart rate per minute	60	66	72	78	84	90	96	102	108	114	120	126

Situations to Avoid

The following precautions can help you prevent overstressing your heart.

1. Avoid extra activity when you are already tired.
2. Avoid excessively hot or cold showers or saunas.

3. Avoid outdoor activity in very hot, humid, cold, or smoggy weather. Consider a controlled environment such as a shopping mall for walking.
4. Avoid holding your breath, try to breath normally through all exertion (as during bowel movements, exercise, bending, reaching).
5. Avoid lifting objects over 10 pounds (children, grocery bags, suitcases).
6. Avoid prolonged stooping or bending postures, also pushups.
7. Avoid prolonged use of arms above your shoulders (painting).
8. Avoid pushing, pulling or straining with heavy objects (heavy doors, furniture, cars, motorcycles).
9. Avoid opening heavy or stuck objects (jar lids, drawers, windows).
10. Avoid increased activity if you are already having symptoms of angina.

Monitoring Your Symptoms:

Learning to pay attention to how and what you feel during rest and during activity is perhaps the most important thing of all.

Signs & Symptoms of Too Much Activity:

1. Angina (discomfort, pressure or pain) in chest, shoulders, arms, throat, jaw.

- 2. Dizziness or lightheadedness with activity.
- 3. Unusual or extreme shortness of breath or fatigue.
- 4. Palpitations, chest pounding, new irregular heartbeats.

What to Do if You Experience These Symptoms:

- 1. Slow down and stop your activity.
- 2. Take your medicine for angina (if this applies to you).
- 3. TAKE YOUR PULSE. IS IT REGULAR OR IRREGULAR?
Write down your rate.
- 4. If symptoms persist or recur, consult your MD at that time or call local emergency medical services (paramedics).

The Home Activities Guidelines are intended to help you stay within your safe limits and enjoy your appropriate level of activity. If you have any questions, call the Physical Therapy Department at:

(415) 202-1453.

Questions to Ask Your Physician:
