

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY - BACK AT HOME

INTRODUCTION

Was there anything that you did not understand or was not clear about our last teaching? If yes, write down your question(s) to ask the nurse or doctor on your next visit.

My question(s):	Reason why I am asking:

Let's talk about physical activity!

BEING ACTIVE AT HOME

There are many benefits to becoming active after a heart attack, such as:

- Reducing the risk for another heart attack
- Improving aerobic fitness and overall health

It is important to balance your physical activity with rest to allow for continued healing. Everyone's recovery is different which is why **listening to your body** is key. Think about how you feel *during* activity, but also at the end of the day. Use these periods of time to gauge if you can tolerate more activity, or if perhaps you would benefit from decreasing your activity the next day.

When you return home from hospital, your goal is to return to your normal physical activity levels **as your symptoms allow you to**. You are encouraged to get back to regular walking, lifting small weights as desired, work towards getting back to completing your daily tasks around the house, and beginning the process of returning to work.

Avoid vigorous activity for 4-6 weeks (unless otherwise specified by your physician) and have a conversation with your doctor about what strenuous exercise looks like for you. Some examples of vigorous activity include running, heavy weight lifting, high intensity work outs and snow shoveling. **Cardiac Rehab** is the best place to help you gradually get back to strenuous activity (more info about Cardiac Rehab in Sunday's Module).



If you feel unwell at any time while exercising **at home**, please stop, rest, and see how you are feeling. Remember not to overdo activity - start slowly and build up over the next few weeks so your body adjusts safely.

BASIC PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES: TIPS FOR RECOVERY

- The goal over the next 4-6 weeks is to pace yourself and **listen to your body**. Look to balance activity and rest throughout the day.
- Slowly increase your activity each day as your body tolerates it. This will help strengthen your heart while it heals.
- Focus on your breathing and ensure not to hold your breath with periods of activity. Focus on breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Walking is one of the best activities to do while you recover! It keeps you moving, but you can do it at your own pace, and can easily stop to rest if needed. It is best to start by walking on level ground (avoid hills), and exercise in a comfortable environment.
- Avoid extreme temperatures/wind if exercising outdoors. Mall walking can be a good alternative during the winter months, and a stationary bike or treadmill may be used in place of walking if you prefer.
- Please note that it takes more energy to climb stairs or hills. Take your time and rest if you need.
- Exercise does not need to be strenuous to get results. Move more and sit less.
- Plan to do activities during the time of day when you have the most energy.

The following is an *example* of a walking program intended to assist you to work towards getting back to comfortably walking 30 minutes at time.

Example Home Walking Program

	Warm-Up (RPE 2)	Training Period (RPE 3-5)	Cool-Down (RPE 2)
Stage 1	5 minutes	5 minutes	5 minutes
Stage 2	5 minutes	10 minutes	5 minutes
Stage 3	5 minutes	15 minutes	5 minutes
Stage 4	5 minutes	20 minutes	5 minutes
Stage 5	5 minutes	25 minutes	5 minutes
Stage 6	Speak to your Cardiac Rehabilitation team or Health Care Provider before proceeding to chapter 4 of <i>“Living Well with Heart Disease”</i>		

When exercising after a heart attack, we recommend that you stay within an RPE level of 3-5, meaning that you are working at a level of what feels moderate to hard for you. Once you feel the level that you are working at is getting to be “easy”, you can extend the period of time you are walking for.

Tip: You should be able to talk in complete sentences while exercising. If you are not able to talk and exercise you may be working too hard and should reduce your effort.

RATE OF PERCEIVED EXERTION (RPE) SCALE

The RPE Scale, is a tool used to determine how hard *you* feel that you are working. The numbers have corresponding phrases to help rate how challenging you find an activity. This is the best tool to use when you are working towards progressing your activity after having a heart attack.

RPE	How It Feels	Talk Test	Description for Strength Exercises
0.5	Very, very easy	Sing – you have enough breath to sing or whistle	Little to no effort
1	Very easy		
2	Easy		
3	Moderate	Talk – you should have enough breath to talk	Light effort Could do 4-6 more repetitions
4	Somewhat hard		
5	Hard		
6	Very hard	Gasp – you cannot say more than 4-6 words without gasping	Could do 3 more repetitions
7			
8		Gasp – you cannot say more than 2-3 words without gasping	Could do 2 more repetitions
9	Very, very hard		Could do 1 more repetition
10	Maximum	You cannot talk at all	Maximum effort

Normal Responses During Activity	Abnormal Responses During Activity or at Rest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comfortable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chest pain (angina)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry or slightly sweaty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very sweaty, cold, or clammy

Normal Responses During Activity	Abnormal Responses During Activity or at Rest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aware of your breathing but not out of breath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short of breath, gasping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaxed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dizzy or sick to your stomach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slightly tired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very rapid or pounding heartbeat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muscles feel like they are doing work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tense or nervous



If you experience symptoms that are not normal at home, **stop exercising**, sit or lie down and take your normal dosage of Nitroglycerin as prescribed by your pharmacist or doctor. If symptoms persist after 2 doses (10 minutes), use a third dose, and **IMMEDIATELY** call 9-1-1 or your local Emergency Centre.

Do not drive yourself.

If the above responses go away with rest, but you notice they happen each time you try to exercise, let your nurse or doctor know.

STATIONARY BICYCLES AND TREADMILLS

If using a treadmill or a stationary bike is something that you prefer, these are great alternatives to regular walking:

- For **treadmill** use, we encourage you to start by keeping it flat (without incline).
- For **stationary bike** use, we encourage you to start at a slow speed with little to no tension.

Once you feel the level that you are working at is getting to be “easy”, you can progress the difficulty of the activity.

SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

After 6 weeks: Now you can set physical activity goals. Physical activity goals should be set following a simple, yet effective methods called **SMART** goals. Your goals should be:

- S** – Specific: Make your goal specific, like “to go for a 30 minute walk every day”.
- M** – Measurable: Measure your goal, like “walk 3 km in 30 minutes”.
- A** – Achievable: Is the goal achievable? Make it realistic for your ability.
- R** – Relevant: How does the goal fit with your broader goals?
- T** – Time Bound: What is the realistic time frame for accomplishing the goal?

LEARN MORE ABOUT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

More information about Cardiac Rehabilitation can be found in Cardiac Rehab Sunday's module.

Additional resources are also available on the MB ACS Network website at: <https://mbacsnetwork.ca/education> or scan the QR code:

