



Daily Exercise and Activity

When Living With Heart Failure

Set Goals for Daily Exercise

Being physically active is important for your health! Regular physical activity can help your heart get stronger. It is important to find physical activity that you enjoy and feel good doing. There are several types of activities that you can benefit from:

- Aerobic, such as walking, biking and swimming
- Resistive, such as lifting free weights
- Respiratory, to increase your lung power
- Mindfulness, such as basic meditation and tai chi

Activity Guidelines — Always Listen to Your Body

- Rest for 60 to 90 minutes after eating and after strenuous activity.
- Do warm-up and cool-down exercises while seated.
- Gradually increase your activity and heart rate.
- Walk at a pace that's comfortable. You should be able to walk and talk.
- Walk on flat or level surfaces. Avoid hills or inclines at first.
- Take the stairs as long as you are not feeling short of breath, weak or tired. Use the railing for balance.
- Listen to your body. Pace yourself. Rest if you're tired.
- When you're being active, breathing can feel harder. You should still be able to hold a conversation. If you cannot, that is a good sign to rest.
- Be seen to be safe. If you're out near or after dark, wear reflective clothing or safety lights.

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Talk to your healthcare team about which exercises are best for you. Keep track of what you do and when, plus how you feel while you're exercising. Let your healthcare team know if you are having difficulty with exercise, such as shortness of breath, increased fatigue or chest pain.

When to Avoid Exercise

- When it's really hot, cold or humid outside, you may want to exercise indoors.
- Be aware that exercise is more difficult in high-altitude locations.
- When you've experienced an emotional or stressful event, you may want to give yourself time to recover before resuming your exercise routine.

Stop Exercising Immediately if You Notice Any of the Following

- Chest pressure or pain
- Pain in your neck, lower jaw, upper back or arms
- Extreme fatigue
- Pale complexion or fingers turning blue
- Irregular or rapid heartbeat
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Nausea
- Unusual shortness of breath
- Unusual sweating or unexplained anxiety

If you experience any of these symptoms, stop the activity and rest. If the symptoms persist after resting for five minutes, call your healthcare team. If the symptoms are severe or get worse, call 911.



Keep Up Daily Activities

Heart failure can cause you to slow down, but there are still plenty of things you can do if you pace yourself. Make your daily activities easier by following these tips.

General Guidelines:

- Allow plenty of time for personal activities, and schedule rest breaks throughout the day.
- Avoid holding your breath with exertion, such as getting in and out of bed, having a bowel movement or struggling to open a tight jar.
- Avoid reaching or bending whenever possible. Store commonly used items between knee and shoulder height.
- Activities you once thought were easy may now be difficult. For example, bathing, showering and dressing might take longer for you to do.

Grooming:

- Use lukewarm water. Don't use water that's too cold or hot.
- Use a long-handled bath sponge to wash your legs and feet.
- Try a shower chair.
- Rest as needed before and after showering.

Dressing:

- Allow extra time to get ready in the morning.
- Organize and lay out clothes the night before.
- Wear clothing that is easy to put on and take off.
- Try a long-handled shoe horn, elastic shoelaces and other items that make dressing easier.

Housework:

- Keep cleaning supplies together in a small basket or bucket.
- Use a laundry basket with wheels. Sit down to sort and fold clothes.
- Transfer wet clothes to the dryer in small loads. Avoid large, heavy loads.
- Keep your elbows close to your sides when lifting groceries and large pots and pans.