

EXERCISING WITH HEART FAILURE

- ✘ **Heart failure decreases the ability of the heart to adequately deliver oxygen rich blood to the muscles and tissues**
 - ✘ **Heart failure even changes the types of muscle fibers in your body. It robs you mostly of the fibers for endurance.**
 - ✘ **Exercise allows the body to become more efficient in its use of oxygen, so a muscle that is exercised regularly uses less oxygen to do a job than one that has not been exercised.**
- ü Over time, regular exercise can help you feel better and have less difficulty with daily activities, reducing some of the symptoms of shortness of breath and fatigue.
 - ü Exercise does not have to be strenuous to be valuable and it is important to balance activity and rest.
 - ü Walking is one of the best exercises for improving your health. A stationary bicycle can also be very valuable, especially if you have joint problems making walking more difficult.
 - ü Listed below is a suggested walking/bicycle program for someone who has not been exercising regularly. It is very gradual, increasing by one minute every 3 days or so.

Walking program	Duration	Bicycle program	Duration
Week 1-2	3-6 minutes	Week 1-2	5-10 minutes
Week 3-4	6 -10 minutes	Week 3-4	10-15 minutes
Week 5-6	10-15 minutes	Week 5-6	15-20 minutes
Week 7-8	15-20 minutes	Week 7-8	20-30 minutes

TO START:

- Walk on level surfaces; avoid hills and keep a slow pace
- Walk in a familiar area each day
- Bicycle at a slow speed with little or no tension
- When starting a new activity level, have a family member or friend with you
- Rest about one hour after meals before you exercise (digestion increases the work of the heart)
- If you become tired or feel unwell, shorten your walk/cycle time
- Pace your exercise so you can walk/cycle and carry on a conversation

AVOID:

- Exercising in extreme conditions of temperature such as: hot and humid or cold and windy days. During this time, exercise indoors (e.g. shopping mall or gym)
- Exercises that require sudden bursts of energy
- Exercises where you hold your breath, grunt or bear down
- Exercises that require you to lift heavy weights above the level of your heart (more than 5 pounds)
- Exercising if you feel unwell
- Participating in competitive or contact sports

EXERCISE GUIDELINES:

- It is important to start exercising for short periods of time and at a slow walking pace. Gradually increase the length of time before increasing the level of intensity.
- If you are feeling well enough you may exercise twice a day. This may include 2 walks or 2 bicycle sessions or 1 of each for variety.
- You should be back to your pre-walk or resting state within 10 – 15 minutes of completing your exercise. If not, the next time you exercise, reduce the time you exercise by half and begin again gradually.
- If any symptoms develop, stop increasing the cycling/walking time. Go back to the previous level of activity for a few days. Listen to what your body is telling you. You may be trying to do too much too soon.
- If you would like more specific exercises or lifestyle guidelines, ask your physician for a referral to a Cardiac Rehabilitation Program.

STOP if you...

- ▶ Become short of breath
- ▶ Feel weak, tired lightheaded or dizzy
- ▶ Have any discomfort, specially chest discomfort
- ▶ Have a fast heart rate
- ▶ Have nausea or excessive sweating