


EXERCISE & THE HEART

Regular daily exercise reduces your risk of heart disease because it lowers blood pressure and blood cholesterol, improves the way your body controls glucose and helps maintain your weight at a healthy level. You can protect yourself against heart disease by combining an active lifestyle with healthy eating.



Heart disease is the largest single cause of death in Australia, particularly for middle and older aged people. Regular daily activity is vital for a healthy heart.

WHAT EXERCISE IS BEST?

The best exercise for your heart is a moderate intensity activity (using the large muscle groups) that involves some effort, but does not necessarily have to cause 'puffing' 'panting', or 'breathlessness'. A good example is a brisk walk at a pace where you are able to comfortably talk but not sing. Other examples include mowing the lawn, digging the garden, cycling, swimming, dancing, and most team sports.

HOW MUCH EXERCISE?

The Heart Foundation recommends 30 minutes or more of moderate exercise on most, if not all, days of the week. The 30 minutes need not be in one session. Combine short sessions of different activities of around 10-15 minutes each, to a total of 30 minutes or more.

HOW TO GET STARTED

It is never too late to start being active.

- People who are usually inactive can improve their health and well being by becoming moderately active on a regular basis.
- Think of exercise as an opportunity to improve your health and not as a time-wasting inconvenience.

IMPORTANT

Get advice from your doctor before starting an exercise program if you:

- have, or think you have, heart disease
- have a close relative with heart disease
- are overweight (see the *Weight & Health* Fact Card)
- are a male over 35 years old, or a female over 45 years old and do not exercise
- have had a stroke
- have high blood pressure (see *High Blood Pressure* Fact Card)
- have any medical conditions, past or present, which may affect you exercising
- smoke – now is the time to think about quitting (see Smoking Facts Cards)
- haven't exercised regularly for a while.

If exercise causes discomfort, makes you breathless, causes pain in your chest or your heart to beat too fast, stop straight away and see your doctor.



- Be active every day in as many ways as you can – make a habit of using the stairs instead of taking lifts, or do things yourself instead of using labour-saving machines – you do not need fancy expensive equipment to exercise.
- Remember the 30 minutes daily need not be in one continuous session. Combine short sessions of different activities of around 10 to 15 minutes each, to a total of 30 minutes or more e.g. 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes after lunch and 10 minutes after work.
- If you can, also enjoy some regular, vigorous exercise for extra health and fitness. Vigorous exercise makes you ‘huff and puff’. Three to four days a week for 30 minutes or more each time will give you the best results.
- Plan your exercise in advance – exercise with a friend – make it fun!
- Don’t exercise with injuries or if you feel pain or discomfort – consult your doctor or physiotherapist (see *Sprains and Strains* Fact Card)
- Make a realistic activity plan for the next two weeks. Check off each activity you do, and revise your plan when you finish.
- If you aren’t able to stick to all or part of your activity plan, think about what went wrong and allow for the next time. It doesn’t mean you’ve failed. Try again with a new plan.
- Reward yourself (in a healthy way) when you’ve stuck to your plan.

SELF CARE

- Spend 30 minutes a day walking briskly. Go to different places to make it interesting.
- Park your car 10-15 minutes from work and walk, or get off the bus (or train, tram) two or three stops early and walk that last part.
- Take the stairs instead of the lift.
- Relax while you walk — let your thoughts wander. Listen to music.
- Replace fluids during and after you exercise by drinking water or fruit juice. Avoid drinks like tea, coffee or alcohol as these can cause your body to lose fluid.
- Wear comfortable clothing and shoes made for walking or running.
- Warm up and stretch before starting any activity, and cool down with gentle stretching afterwards. This will help avoid muscle cramps, stiffness, aches and pains.

BENEFITS

- More energy!
- Build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints
- Lower blood cholesterol
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure
- Aid in the control and prevention of diabetes
- Less risk of colon cancer
- Less risk of heart disease
- A feeling of well-being, decreased feelings of depression and anxiety
- Improved quality of life.

Other relevant Fact Cards:

- Smoking Cards
- *Sprains and Strains*
- *Weight and Health*
- *High Blood Pressure*

Contact:

Your doctor — listed under Medical Practitioners in the yellow pages of the phone book

The National Heart Foundation of Australia — listed under ‘N’ in the white pages of your capital city phone book

Your Self Care pharmacist — to find: (02)6283 4777

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask your pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

Your **Self Care** pharmacist



KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN
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