

Exercising when you have heart disease

This handout offers guidelines for exercise when you have heart disease.

Why exercise

- You will feel better
- You will lose weight
- It may help lower your blood pressure
- It may help lower your cholesterol
- It makes your heart stronger

Before you start an exercise program

- Ask your doctor if you need your heart checked
 - Exercise stress test
 - Echo test or echocardiogram
 - Other tests

What exercises can you do

- Most people can do light exercise
 - Walking
 - Light jogging
 - Swimming
 - Stretching

Do NOT do these activities

- Most people with heart disease should not do hard work or exercise
 - No yardwork
 - No snow shoveling
 - No heavy lifting
- Ask your doctor what things you should NOT do

Do NOT exercise too hard

- Do not get too out of breath
- Do not get too sweaty
- Do not get too warm
- Do an easy slow warm up before you start
- Drink water before and after you exercise

Exercising when you have heart disease (cont)

Know the warning signs of a heart attack

- Pain or ache in chest, neck, jaw, shoulder, or arm
- Heavy or pressed feeling in chest may spread to neck, shoulder, or arm
- Heartburn or pain in upper chest
- Heart beats very fast or skips a beat
- Feel faint or lightheaded
- Sweat a lot
- Short of breath
- Sick to stomach (nausea)

Nitroglycerin

- Ask your doctor if you need to take nitroglycerin
 - Before you do an activity that can cause chest pain
 - When a chest pain starts
- Ask your doctor how to take nitroglycerin

The content in this letter is intended as general information and may not apply to you or your condition. Talk to your doctor about how to best use this information and how to take care of your medical condition. This information is not intended to provide or replace professional medical advice or services.
