

B) Exercise – an Investment in Health

TEN GOOD REASONS TO EXERCISE

Exercise can help to...

- Lower all-cause mortality
- Reduce the risk of developing coronary heart disease and possibly stroke
- Lower blood pressure
- Increase HDL levels (the ‘good’ cholesterol) and decrease LDL (the ‘bad’ cholesterol)
- Reduce the risk of developing non-insulin dependent diabetes; improve the management of insulin dependent diabetes
- Maintain a healthy weight and reduce percentage of body fat
- Prevent osteoporosis by strengthening bones
- Increase muscle strength and joint flexibility, helpful for arthritis and injury prevention
- Relieve stress and lessen anxiety and depression
- Raise self-esteem and confidence in performing daily tasks

Exercise for a healthy heart

‘Aerobic’ exercise is particularly beneficial for the heart. An aerobic activity is one in which the heart and lungs are able to supply the muscles with oxygen for a prolonged period of time.

Examples of aerobic activities include:

- Brisk walking, jogging, cycling
- Swimming, dancing
- Use of equipment at the gym such as the rowing machine, stair stepper, treadmill and stationary bike

In contrast ‘anaerobic’ exercise, also known as isometric, is when the muscles use up oxygen faster than the blood can supply it. Anaerobic activities are of high intensity and brief duration, such as sprinting or weightlifting. They do not offer the same benefits for the heart as aerobic activities do and are considered dangerous for people with heart disease. Those who have had a heart attack are advised to avoid isometric exercise.

How much is enough?

Experts in the field recommend the following to achieve health-related benefits:

- Activity of moderate intensity
- For 30 minutes or more (can be two 15 minute sessions, if necessary)
- On 5 or more days per week

Exercising at a ‘moderate’ level should leave one warm and a bit puffed, but not gasping for breath. It should still be possible to hold a conversation.

H-E-A-R-T UK’s guidelines

- Regardless of fitness level, start ‘slow and easy’. Gradually increase the intensity and length of time
- Exercise should be sustained. Choose an aerobic activity and build up to the 30 minute goal – or more, if comfortable doing so
- If chest pain or shortness of breath is encountered, stop and rest
- Exercise will only bring about health benefits if performed regularly. So find enjoyable activities and build them into the daily routine
- Make sure that you drink plenty of water whilst exercising
- If you have never exercised before or have not exercised for a long time it is advisable to speak to your GP before beginning a new programme of exercise

Exercise as part of a busy lifestyle

People often cite lack of time as a reason for not being physically active. With some creative thinking there are ways to build exercise into a busy lifestyle. Health benefits can be gained by walking approximately 10, 000 steps a day. A pedometer will help you monitor just how many steps you have taken.

Instead of taking the car, why not walk, cycle or jog? When taking the bus, try getting off two stops earlier and walking the rest of the way.

While sustained exercise is the goal, shorter bouts of activity still contribute. There are all sorts of possibilities in and around the house. If there are stairs, use them often. Try pedalling away at a stationary bike while reading, watching television or talking on the telephone. Performing very physical housework or working outside in the garden are also ways to keep active.

A Useful Guide	
TYPE OF EXERCISE	PER 30 MINUTES
LIGHT INTENSITY	
Ironing	69kcal
Cleaning/dusting	75kcal
Walking/Strolling	75kcal
MODERATE INTENSITY	
Painting and decorating	90kcal
Hoovering	105kcal
Golf	129kcal
Badminton	135kcal
Brisk walking	150kcal
Mowing Lawn	165kcal
Cycling: 10-12mph	180kcal
VIGOROUS INTENSITY	
Aerobic dancing	195kcal