

Heart Failure: Getting Active and Staying Active

People with heart failure feel better when they stay active. In the past, patients were told to rest and give up activities. Today, research shows that daily activity is safe for most people with heart failure. Your care team will work with you to create an activity plan that is right for you.

This information is a guide to the overall benefits of activity and teaches you how to safely become more active.

Why is daily activity important?

Daily physical activity and exercise can have immediate and long-term health benefits. Most importantly, regular activity can improve your quality of life.

What are the benefits of regular physical activity?

- Improves mood
- Boosts energy
- Decreases symptoms
- Lowers blood pressure and cholesterol
- Improves your heart's function
- Lowers the risk for diabetes

Staying active is one of the best ways you can improve your symptoms. If it is easier, you can divide your activity sessions into smaller blocks of time. Make it a goal to do some activity for a total of 30 minutes every day. Start slowly and increase your activity in gradually. Do not forget to include time for a warm up and a cool down.

Activity Step 1: Warm up

A proper warm up will allow you to safely ease into activity. Warming up is very slow, light activity that prepares your muscle for aerobic or weight training exercise. An appropriate warm up should last 5-10 minutes. Some possible warm up activities include:

Perform each activity 10 or more times as tolerated.



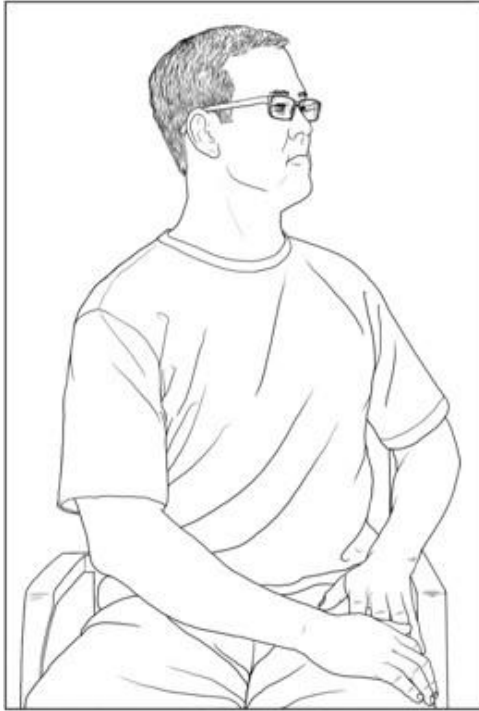
1. Shoulder Shrugs

- Bring your shoulders up to your ears while breathing in.
- Then relax your shoulders down while breathing out.
- Repeat.



2. Shoulder Circles

- Sitting upright, roll your shoulders in a smooth motion up, back and down in a circle.
- Repeat then reverse direction.



3. Trunk Twists

- Slowly rotate your trunk to the right, looking over your shoulder.
- Hold and stretch.
- Then rotate your trunk to the left, hold and stretch.
- Repeat sequence.

4. Trunk Sidebending

- Hold your arms relaxed at your sides and maintain your trunk upright.
- Lean to your right side slowly.
- Hold and stretch.
- Then lean to your left side, hold and stretch.
- Repeat sequence.



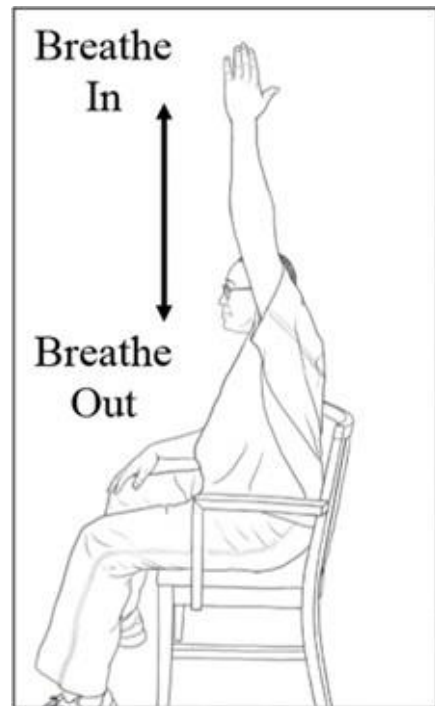


5. Chest Stretch

- Place your hands behind your head while sitting upright.
- Move your elbows back breathing in until you feel a stretch, hold.
- Relax elbows forward breathing out to rest.
- Repeat.

6. Forward Arm Raise

- Sitting with upright posture, straighten your arm with your thumb facing up.
- Raise your arm up to the front over your head. Your elbow should be next to your ear.
- Repeat with your other arm.

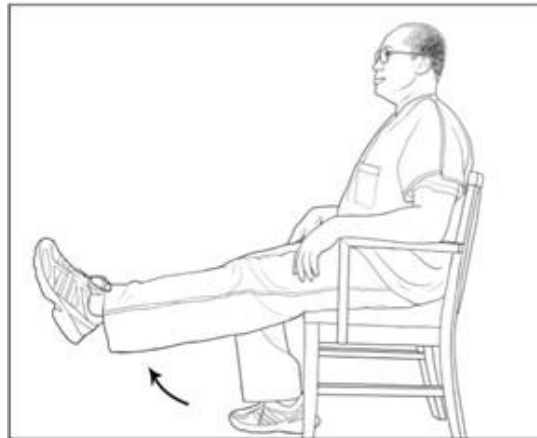


7. Ankle Pumps

- Move your ankle up and down (like pressing and releasing a gas pedal).
- You may perform this exercise sitting or lying down.
- Repeat.

8. Leg kicks

- Sitting with upright posture in a chair or in the bed, slowly kick your leg out straight.
- Hold for 3 seconds, then repeat with the other leg.



Activity Step 2: Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activity means moving your large muscles in a continuous way for a sustained period of time. Walking, swimming or pedaling are examples. Aerobic activity should be done daily. The key to becoming more active is to do it slowly and build up gradually. Move at a pace that is comfortable for you. Be sure to listen to your body and be aware of your symptoms.

How do I follow an aerobic activity program, like a walking or pedaling program?

1. Complete your warm up exercises described above.
2. Perform activity at a moderate effort for 30 minutes or more daily. You can complete these minutes in a single session or break it up over the course of the day.
3. Track your minutes spent doing aerobic activity (see activity log on page 15 of this section).

If you are unable to walk without assistance, please consider including the seated activities described above in your 30 minute daily program.

How will I rate my activity intensity?

During aerobic activity, you will rate your effort. This means that your care team wants you to estimate how hard the activity is for you. This is called **exertion** or effort. Use the table below while you are doing an activity. It ranges from 6 to 20. **6 means "no exertion at all" and 20 means "maximal exertion."**

How will I use the perceived exertion scale?

During activity, take a moment to sense how you are feeling. Now relate that feeling to one of the numbers on the **rate of perceived exertion (RPE)** scale below. For example, sitting in a chair you might feel like you are exerting yourself at a 6. This means it is "no exertion" (or very low effort) on the perceived exertion scale. Walking at a moderate pace, you might perceive to be a 11 "fairly light" or 13 "somewhat hard" effort. It is advised that you **do not exercise at "very hard" or "very, very hard" effort.**

Identify the level of exertion you are feeling:		Activity zone instructions	
6	No exertion		
7	very very light exertion		
8			
9	very light exertion		
10			
11	fairly light exertion		This is your exercise goal: a rating of 11-13 is ideal
12			
13	somewhat hard		
14			Slow down your movements to get back to the green zone
15	Hard		
16			
17	very hard	Stop and rest	
18			
19	very very hard		
20			

What are the signs and symptoms of overexertion?

During exercise, it is normal to feel short of breath, sweat and have a faster heartbeat than normal. If exercise puts too much strain on your heart, you may experience signs of overexertion. The following signs are things to watch for:

- Significant shortness of breath
- Chest pain or tightness
- Unusual or extreme fatigue
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Fast or irregular heartbeat

Steps to take if you have any of these symptoms while you are active:

1. Slow down
2. Rest while standing
3. Rest while sitting
4. **Stop** the activity, if your symptoms do not get better with the first 3 steps.
5. **Call 9-1-1** if your chest pain or other symptoms do not go away.



**Never stop exercising suddenly.
This may cause you to feel dizzy or lightheaded.
Always do a cool down routine.**

Activity Step 3: Strengthening Activity:

The purpose of this exercise program is to improve strength and mobility. Please do not attempt these standing activities without assistance unless you are able to walk independently without an assistive device (cane, walker).

Do these exercises while standing and holding onto something stable. With each exercise remain upright and stable.

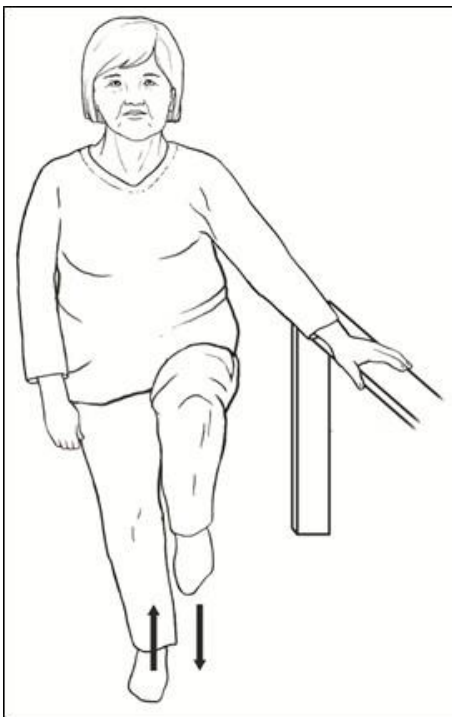
Perform these exercises as directed by your Physical Therapist.

Repeat each exercise _____ times, _____ times per day.

Remember: Never hold your breath while exercising.

1. Heel and Toe Raises

- Raise your heels off the ground.
- Then raise your toes off the ground.



2. Marching

- Lift one knee up towards the ceiling.
- Repeat with the other leg.

3. Hip abduction/adduction

- Bring your leg out to the side keeping your foot pointing straight in front of you, return your leg to the start position.
- Repeat with the other leg.



4. Hip extension

- Bring your leg out behind you, emphasizing your thigh going behind you, squeezing your buttocks.
- Repeat with your other leg.

5. Hamstring Curls

- Bend one knee, bringing your ankle up towards your bottom.
- Repeat with your other leg.



6. Mini Squats

- Start by having a chair behind you while you are holding onto the kitchen counter.
- Stick your bottom out backwards and bend your knees as if you're going to sit down.
- Do not sit down entirely; rise back up before you touch the chair.
- Only lower as far as you can without losing control.

7. Forward Step Ups

- Step up with the right foot, followed by the left foot.
- Step down with the left foot, followed by the right foot.
- Repeat starting with the opposite foot.



8. Lateral Step Ups

- Standing sideways, step up with your right foot, followed by your left foot.
- Make sure you leave enough room for your left foot, on the step.
- Step down leading with your left foot, followed by your right foot.
- Repeat with the opposite side.

9. Trunk Twists

- Slowly rotate your trunk to the right, looking over your shoulder.
- Then rotate your trunk to the left.
- Repeat sequence.

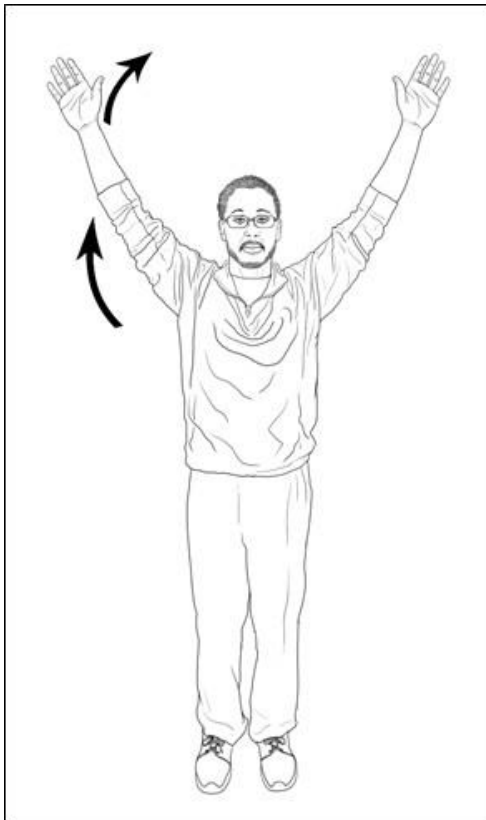


10. Trunk Side Bends

- Hold your arms relaxed at your sides and maintain your trunk upright.
- Lean slowly to your right side.
- Then slowly lean to your left side.
- Repeat sequence.

11. Forward Arm Raise

- Straighten your arm with your thumb facing up.
- Raise your arm up to the front of your head. Your elbow should be next to your ear.
- Repeat with your other arm.



12. Out, Up and Over

- Hold your arms straight at your sides with your thumb up.
- Raise your arm(s) up to the side over your head.
- Repeat sequence.

13. Arm Circles

- Hold your arms straight out to your sides.
- Move your arm(s) in a forward and circular motion.
- Repeat, moving in a backwards circular motion.



Activity Step 4: Cool Down

Similar to the warm up phase, your cool down should last 5-10 minutes. This will help your body recover from activity. The best way to cool down is to decrease the intensity of your activity. For example, decrease your walking speed or complete 3-4 seated exercises described on pages 2-5 of this section.

How do I track my activity at home?

Using a tracking tool is a great way to monitor your daily activity and keep you motivated. You can use this tracking log to record your activities and watch your progress. A full-page version of the Activity Tracking Log can be printed from the Michigan Medicine Care Guides from you Clinician site:

<http://careguides.med.umich.edu/>

- Find the activity you performed (in the left column) and check the box on the day the activity was done.
- You can divide your activity sessions into smaller blocks of time just make it a goal to do some activity for a total of 30 minutes every day.
- Don't forget to warm up and cool down.

Activity instructions:	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Warm up: 5-10 minutes							
Aerobic Activity (walking, pedaling, etc.) 30 minutes daily							
Strength Activities As instructed by your Physical Therapist							
Cool down: 5-10 minutes							

There are a variety of activity trackers available to help you track too. An activity tracker is a device that tracks your movement, such as a traditional pedometer or other **wearable device**, or a **smartphone app**.

Below are examples of some you can use:

Wearable devices: Jawbone, Fitbit, Nike FuelBand, Withings

Smartphone apps: MyFitnessPal

What are my exercise goals?

The overall goal for most people with heart failure is to reach 30 minutes of exercise throughout the day. This can be done with rest breaks. For example, you can be active for three 10-minute blocks to get to your 30- minute goal.

Activity Goal Example

What is your goal?

My goal: I will walk for 10 minutes 3 times per day.

How I will reach this goal?

I will walk with spouse two times per day and one time by myself.

See the last page of this section for your own goal setting.

Cardiac Rehabilitation Programs

What is Cardiac Rehabilitation?

Cardiac Rehabilitation, or cardiac rehab, is a program designed to teach you how to be more active and make lifestyle changes that can lead to a stronger heart and better health. Your cardiac rehabilitation program will be tailored to your needs and based on your health status. We use a patient and family centered approach to empower patients towards better health.

What happens in Cardiac Rehabilitation?

In Cardiac Rehabilitation you will learn how to:

- Exercise safely under the supervision of a certified exercise physiologist or physical therapist.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet under the supervision of a registered dietitian.
- Make healthy lifestyle changes to reduce your risk factors for heart and blood vessel disease.
- Manage and reduce your stress and symptoms of depression.

What are the benefits of Cardiac Rehabilitation?

The benefits of a Cardiac Rehabilitation program include:

- Improved blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Improved symptoms
- Improved overall health and quality of life
- Increased energy level and ability to return to usual activities
- Improvement in taking medications correctly and safely
- Fewer hospital admissions
- Improved mood and self-esteem
- Greater social interaction

How do I enroll in Cardiac Rehabilitation?

As a heart failure patient you may be eligible to participate in cardiac rehab. Exceptions include cardiac rehab after procedures to implant a pacemaker or implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD). Coverage for heart failure is limited to patients with a heart that has very limited ability to pump out blood (Ejection Fraction <35%). Cardiac rehabilitation will begin about 6 weeks after you are discharged from the hospital. Check with your medical team and health insurance company to determine if cardiac rehab is covered under your insurance plan.

Returning to work

In most cases, your heart failure can be adequately treated and controlled, allowing you to continue to work. Your ability to return to work will depend on a number of things:

- Your overall health
- Your symptoms
- The type of work you do

Your health care provider can help you determine if and when you are ready to go back to work and if you are able to return to your regular job. Each situation will need to be addressed on an individual basis.

Sexual Activity

Is it safe to have sex if I have heart failure?

Intimacy is an important aspect of everyday life, and just because you have heart failure doesn't mean you cannot continue to enjoy intimacy with your partner. Most people with heart failure can still have an active sex life. You should feel comfortable bringing up the topic of sex at any time with your provider. It is also important to ask your provider when it is safe to resume sexual activity.

You can view sexual activity like any cardiovascular exercise. Typically, sex requires an effort similar to brisk walking, heavy household cleaning, or mowing the lawn. Most people experience a slight increase in heart rate and blood pressure, which is normal.

Here are some general guidelines for sexual activity:

- Choose a time when you are rested and relaxed.
- Wait two hours after eating a meal or drinking alcohol.
- Remember it is normal for your breathing and heart rate to increase during sex and that these should return to normal shortly afterward.
- Stop and rest if you have trouble breathing.
- Stop if you:
 - Feel lightheaded
 - Have chest pain or pressure
 - Have heart palpitations (racing, pounding, fluttering, or skipping a beat)
- Call 911 if your chest pain or other symptoms are not relieved when you stop.
- Use foreplay as a warm-up to prepare your heart for the increased effort sexual activity requires.
- Avoid positions in which you support your weight with your arms.
- Have sex in positions that are less strenuous such as lying on the bottom or with you and your partner lying side by side.
- If you are not ready for sex, there are other intimate activities that you can do such as kissing, holding hands, or massage to express your feelings for your partner.
- Talk to your provider if you have any questions or concerns.

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Notes

What is my activity goal?

How will I reach this goal?