



Cardiac Rehabilitation Exercise Guidelines *Before* Starting the Program

After a cardiac event or procedure, it is important that you begin an exercise program to improve your endurance and conditioning. Attending an outpatient cardiac rehab program is the safest way to do this, and research shows that people who join cardiac rehab have better outcomes than those who do not. In this recovery period *before* starting cardiac rehab, it is recommended that you start an independent low-level home exercise program to gradually build up your activity level before moving on to higher levels of exercise in the outpatient program.

Here are some tips on getting started:

- Start with walking – it can be done anywhere and is important for carrying out most of our daily activities.
 - You can walk anywhere – in your home or outdoors in good weather.
 - If walking outside, start with short distances and stay close to home so you do not get too far away and have a hard time walking back.
- Start a walking program of 5-10 minutes at a time, 2-3x/day. However long you can walk now, aim to increase the duration by 5 minutes every week until you are able to walk 20-30 minutes without stopping. Once you are able to walk 20 minutes all at once, you can cut back to 1x/day.
- Don't worry about speed – at this point in your recovery it is more important to walk longer rather than faster. Walk at a pace that is most comfortable for you.
- If you enjoy another form of exercise such as a stationary bike, you may do that as well and follow the same guidelines as walking for increasing duration.
- Increase your general activity levels at home
 - While watching TV, get up during every commercial and walk around the house.
 - When working at the computer, set an alarm to make you get up and walk around every 15 minutes.
 - If you have stairs in your house, or even outside, try to take the stairs 2-3 extra times each day.
 - If you have an activity tracker or step counter, set a small goal for yourself for the amount of steps to take in one day and work to achieve it. Then increase that goal by a small increment every week.
 - Stay flexible – muscles can get tight so it is a good idea to stretch every day. We can provide you with a home stretching program if needed.

*You should stop walking or exercising if you experience any chest discomfort, palpitations, dizziness/lightheadedness, or shortness of breath. If the symptoms persist after you stop, call your doctor or call 911 if you experience distress.