

Active Living for a Healthy Heart

➤ **Pick Something You Enjoy:**

No one should dread exercise! Find an activity you really like and incorporate it into your day as your exercise. Whether it is going for a walk, going for a bike ride, or going out dancing, the important thing is to move your body and get your heart rate up!

➤ **Warm Up and Cool Down:**

Do a 5-10 minute warm up prior to exercise to warm up your muscles. This will help you avoid injuries during your workout. You should also do a 5-10 minute cool down after your exercise to bring your heart rate and blood pressure down gradually and safely. The important thing to remember is not to stop exercising abruptly! Both the warm up and the cool down should include gentle stretching (up to 3 repetitions with a 15-30 second hold).

➤ **Frequency:**

The Canada Activity Guide recommends you exercise for 30-60 minutes, 5-6 days/week. If you can't do that much exercise at one time, break it up into smaller chunks (i.e. 10 minutes at a time) throughout your day. If your goal is weight loss, more exercise may be necessary (45-90 minutes, 6-7 days/week).

➤ **Intensity:**

In order to reap the cardiovascular benefits of exercise, you need to be working at a good intensity. One way to tell if you're working hard enough (or too hard) is the walk-and-talk test: you should be breathing harder than at rest, but not so hard that you can't carry on a conversation with an exercise partner.

➤ **Avoid Overexertion:**

If you feel overly tired after exercise it's a sign you're working too hard. Try exercising at a less vigorous intensity next time, or exercise for shorter periods of time, allowing greater rest breaks between exercise sessions. You should also avoid exercising in hot, humid environments.

➤ **Strength Training:**

An active lifestyle involves strength training. The recommendation is to do 2-4 sets of 10-15 repetitions of each exercise 2-4 days/week. Start with weights that are slightly challenging but not too difficult and progress by 2-4 lbs as able. Remember to breathe comfortably and never hold your breath while lifting weights.

➤ **Stay Motivated:**

To keep yourself motivated, try exercising with a friend. You can push each other to stay active! Another trick is to keep an exercise log where you can record what activity you did and how long you did it for. This gives you a visual record of how well you're doing.

➤ **Ways to Incorporate Activity into Your Day:**

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Park further from the door so you have further to walk
- Walk or bike instead of driving whenever possible
- Take a walk on your lunch or coffee break
- Play with your kids or grandkids
- Pack a set of exercise clothes in your car

➤ **Benefits of Cycling:**

- Cycling is a non-weight bearing activity, so it can be a more comfortable form of exercise for people with arthritis in their hips and knees
- Cycling helps improve your balance and coordination
- Cycling helps tone the muscles in your legs
- Cycling can get you where you want to go faster than walking, and sometimes even faster than driving if the traffic is heavy!
- A 15 minute bike ride to and from work five days/week burns the equivalent of 11 lbs of fat per year, and increases your aerobic fitness by over 10% in only six weeks!
- Cycling doesn't give off any carbon emission, so it's better for the environment than driving, and it saves you gas and money.