

OLIVEDALE CLINIC- CARDIAC REHABILITATION INFORMATION

WHY SHOULD WE EXERCISE?

The cardiac patient must be seen in totality; what affects the body, also affects the psyche. Illness causes psychosocial implications and has an effect on the total life of the human being. When a person feels well, you experience a feeling of contentment, which motivates you to be fully involved in your work and hobbies, which ensures quality of life.

The benefits of exercising regularly include improved stamina, lung capacity, heart function, joint flexibility and bone strength, blood circulation, mental alertness, psychological wellbeing and more effective weight control.

Exercise decreases the stress hormones such as cortisol and increases endorphins. Endorphins are the body's natural feel good chemicals, and when they are released through exercise, your mood is boosted naturally.

Fitness ensures extra energy to carry out your daily tasks without getting tired.

ADVANTAGES FOR THE CARDIAC PATIENT

- When we exercise regularly the oxygen requirements of the heart are reduced.
- With exercise the oxygen supply to the heart is improved and increased. Collateral arteries are formed which take over the function of the blocked blood vessels.
- The adhesiveness of blood is reduced, and this prevents the blockage of arteries.
- Exercise has a beneficial effect on risk factors, for example by reducing blood cholesterol the risk of developing high blood pressure, obesity and stress is reduced and even prevented. Self-image improves and anxiety and depression are lowered.
- Fitness develops only if one exercises regularly. Even if a patient was previously a very good athlete or sportsman you must start again from the beginning because you have neglected your fitness. Follow the tortoise approach, begin slowly and increase progressively.

GUIDELINES FOR AN EXERCISE PROGRAMME

1. Walking is the best form of exercise during this plan.
2. Choose an even surface to walk on. Hills may cause tiredness. If your route includes a hill, take it far more slowly.

3. Your planning for the exercise program is very important. Don't walk too far away from your starting point, as you may perhaps feel too tired to walk back. It is advisable to choose a shorter-route and repeat it until you feel well enough to walk back, and to walk a longer distance.
4. Walk at a comfortable pace.
5. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes. Ensure that you can discard some clothing if you get hot on your route.
6. Don't walk or exercise if you have a cold, flu, nausea, or diarrhea.
7. Inhale and exhale calmly and deeply during walking.
8. Don't walk immediately after a meal.
9. Avoid steam baths, saunas, spas and bubble baths.
10. In summer go for a walk during the cooler times of the day and in winter during the warmer times.
11. Avoid activities that require you to use your arms above shoulder level.
12. Don't cross your legs.
13. You must enjoy the way to fitness. During exercise you should not experience pain or discomfort. Strive for a positive and joyful lifestyle.
14. Walking is important for heart and lung fitness. It is important to begin slowly, gradually increase the pace, and then slowly decrease the pace until you are at rest.

WHY SHOULD YOU WARM UP? "BEGIN SLOWLY"

- The heart rate increases gradually.
- Prevent sudden increase in heart rate because it may lead to symptoms.
- The heart and lungs are then prepared for extra work.

WHY SHOULD YOU COOL DOWN? "END SLOWLY"

- To assure the return of heart rate and blood pressure to normal.
- To help with heat distribution.
- To prevent the accumulation of blood in your legs, this may lead to a sudden decrease in blood pressure that may cause cardiac symptoms, dizziness or nausea.

GUIDELINES FOR A WALKING PROGRAMME AT HOME:

Weeks after heart/attack/bypass	Distance	Amount
1 st week	300 m	2 x daily
2 nd week	600 m	2 x daily
3 rd week	800 m	1 x daily
4 th week	1 km	Daily / 4 x weekly
5 th week	1.4 km	Daily / 4 x weekly
6 th week	1.8 km	Daily / 4 x weekly
7 th week	2.2 km	Daily / 4 x weekly
8 th week	2.6 km	Daily / 4 x weekly

If you start 300m on a Monday, you should walk the distance faster by the Friday. Always remember to start and end slowly every time. When you start walking 600m the following week, start slowly and increase your speed progressively.

SYMPTOMS TO LOOK OUT FOR WHEN WALKING:

Is it angina (insufficient blood and oxygen supply to heart muscle), were you just uncomfortable?

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does it get worse when I move my arms, neck and shoulders?
2. Does the nature of the pain change as I change position?
3. Am I uncomfortable for only a few seconds?

If your answer was **yes** to one of the questions, then chances are good that **it wasn't angina**. If you decide that **it was angina, slow down your walking gradually until resting**. The symptoms should disappear in a minute or two and you don't have to be worried. **If it persists longer, contact your doctor.**

Extreme shortness of breath and tiredness:

If the above symptoms occur as the result of **exhaustion or tension**, it might be an equivalent to angina. **Stop the activity that might have caused it, and rest a few minutes** if possible. If you are walking, the best thing to do is to start walking slower, until resting, and lean against a tree or something to support you. When the shortness of breath and tiredness improves, walk back slowly and evaluate why you became so short of breath and tired.

PROGRAM or ACTIVITIES (M.I)

Because you have had a heart attack your physical capabilities are not what they were before the incident and subsequent hospitalization. The physical setback may be slight, or severe depending on the extent of the damage to your heart. Your body as a whole still has to recover.

First week home

- It is important for you to realize that the next 6 weeks is for your heart to heal. Structure and plan your day in such a way that you can complete a task at a comfortable pace to avoid being pressured.
- Your level of physical activity should be the same as at the time of your discharge from the hospital. Rest between actions. It is important that you listen to your body's need.
- Rest as much as necessary; at least twice a day
- Do everything at leisurely pace and again rest in between activities if necessary like getting dressed in the morning after bathing / showering. Shave and/or wash your hair.
- You may be driven short distances, but you may not drive yourself. You can perform light duties around the house and activities like reading watching television doing needlework and watering plants.
- Do not pick up heavy objects and adjust your work surface to a correct and comfortable height to avoid having to bend and stretch too much.
- Avoid raising your arms above your shoulders, like hanging up washing or reaching for something in a cupboard above your head and bringing a weighty thing down.
- Avoid pulling and pushing movements, like moving furniture around etc.
- Follow the walking program on a level surface.
- Limit visitors and phone calls.
- Avoid standing for prolonged periods avoid extreme of temperatures and adverse weather conditions avoid bathing and showering in very cold or warm water

Second week home

- All activities as mentioned above, leisure activities as described under 1st week.
- You should progress with the walking program.
- You still can't drive but you can undertake short outings e.g. shopping. You may be out of the house for a maximum of 2 hours.

- Don't make the bed just straighten it.
- You should perform light duties e.g. laying the table and preparation of simple meals.
- You should perform light duties around the house e.g. watering the garden with a hosepipe.

Third week home

- All activities as mentioned above.
- You should continue with the walking program.
- You may go on longer outings.
- You may do shopping but do not lift anything heavy.
- Household duties e.g. dishwashing sweeping the floor and washing light garments.
- You can perform light tasks around the garden, e.g. weeding while sitting down or watering with a hosepipe.

Fourth week home

- All activities as mentioned above.
- You should progress with the walking program.
- You may drive yourself but not in peak traffic.
- Light household repairs e.g. electrical appliances.
- Social outings of a light and relaxed nature e.g. going to movies.

Fifth week home

- All activities as mentioned above.
- You should progress with the walking program.
- You may become sexually active if you so desire.
- Increase household duties including gardening and socializing

Sixth week home

- All activities as mentioned above.
- You should progress with the walking program and you may join a rehabilitation exercise program.
- Normal household duties may be resumed.
- You may return to work on advice of your doctor.
- Gardening but no shovelling or digging.

Guidelines for sex after a heart attack or heart surgery include:

There is no reason why you cannot enjoy an active sex life again. However, **avoid intercourse in the first 4-6 weeks after your heart attack or operation.** Open communication with your loved one at this time is very important. Discuss your concerns and fears openly with your partner. An open mind and a sense of humour should help relieve your fears.

You may however, be intimate by means of touch. If this leads to sexual intercourse, it won't necessarily be dangerous - the pulse rate increase only for a short period of time.

Sexual intercourse requires about the **same energy as quickly climbing two flights of stairs** and it is thus necessary that you adjust your fitness (and your heart) accordingly.

Avoid intercourse when tired; rather have intercourse when well rested and relaxed, e.g. early morning and weekends.

Wait a few hours after eating a heavy meal or drinking alcohol to avoid putting added stress on your heart.

Avoid acrobatic positions. Choose a comfortable position that allows you to breathe easily and don't put pressure on your sternum while healing.

It is best to lie on your back during intercourse. Avoid supporting yourself on your hands.

Avoid extreme temperatures and wait at least two hours after a meal before having intercourse.

Note your heart's reaction. **If you experience chest pain during intercourse, stop and discuss this with your partner as well as your doctor.**

Take your time and be patient and you will once again be able to enjoy a normal open and honest sexual relationship with your loved one.

Anything else, even long term, that need clarification please do not hesitate to consult your medical practitioner.

INFORMATION REGARDING MEDICATION

1. Take medication at ***the same time every day and according to the directions.***
2. Medication must be ***equally spread over 24 hours, e.g. 4 x per day = every 6 hours.***
3. Medication must be **taken after meals with water**, unless otherwise prescribed.
4. Notify your doctor if any side effects occur, e.g. dizziness.
5. If you consult a Pharmacist, Dentist or any other doctor, you must inform them about your condition as well as medication you use.
6. Do not add any medication to your existing treatment without first discussing it with your Cardiologist, Physician or Surgeon.
7. Keep medication in original containers, in a cool dry place, out of reach of children and protected from light.
8. Don't hand out your medication to other persons with the same problem (NOTE: Your medication has been prescribed specifically for your condition).
9. Don't stop taking your medication under any circumstances before having discussed this matter with your doctor. If you experience severe side-effects, he will adjust the dosage himself
10. It is advisable to obtain a "Medic Alert" bracelet indicating your medications and illness condition as well as your Doctor's name.
11. **Don't take alcohol with your medication.**
12. Information will be given to you as regard to the specific medication you were prescribed.

GUIDELINE OF ACTIVITIES THAT MUST BE AVOIDED

First to Fourth week home:

- Avoid walking uphill.
- No stretching, anything which you raise your arms above your shoulders, except for a quick shower in which you can gently wash your hair.
- No lifting up or moving heavy objects like furniture, suitcases or hanging up washing or stretching to bring something down from a cupboard above the shoulders.
- The heaviest thing you can pick up is a full kettle.

- Avoid any contact sport or activities under extreme circumstances.
- No gardening, mowing the lawn.
- No painting or woodcraft, as the fumes are toxic to the heart while healing.
- Do not drive your vehicle.

Fifth to sixth week home:

- You must still avoid moving and lifting heavy objects.
- Avoid walking uphill.
- Avoid activities under extreme temperatures and conditions.
- No shovelling or digging in your garden.
- No mowing of the lawn.
- It is important to start with a healthy lifestyle immediately before resuming old habits.