

EXERCISING WITH ANGINA



Research suggests that regular exercise is beneficial for individuals with stable angina because of its positive effect on many of the contributing factors, including high blood pressure and cholesterol, diabetes and obesity. Aerobic exercise, in particular, increases blood and oxygen flow to the heart while at rest and when you're doing everyday things like climbing stairs or carrying groceries. The key to maximizing the benefits of exercise is to follow a well-designed program that you can stick to over the long-term.

Getting Started

- Talk with your health care practitioner before starting an exercise program and ask for specific programming recommendations.
- Take all medications as recommended by your physician.
- The goals of your program should be to improve cardiovascular fitness, increase muscle strength and endurance, and improve range of motion.
- Choose low-impact activities such as walking, cycling or water exercises, which involve large muscles groups and can be done continuously.
- If your fitness level is low, start with shorter sessions (10 to 15 minutes) and gradually build up to 20 to 60 minutes, three or more days per week.
- Perform light-resistance circuit training and whole-body range-of-motion exercises two to three days per week.
- Closely monitor your intensity level and stay within your recommended target heart-rate zone. Take frequent breaks during activity if needed.

Exercise Cautions

- Stop exercising immediately if you experience angina. Contact your physician if you experience chest pain, labored breathing or extreme fatigue.
- Upper-body exercises may precipitate angina more readily than lower-body exercises because of a higher pressor response.
- An extended warm-up and cool-down may reduce the risk of angina or other cardiovascular complications following exercise.
- If nitroglycerin has been prescribed, always carry it with you, especially during exercise.
- Avoid extreme weather conditions.

Your exercise program should be designed to maximize the benefits with the fewest risks of aggravating your health or physical condition. Consider contacting a certified health and fitness professional* who can work with you and your health care provider to establish realistic goals and design a safe and effective program that addresses your specific needs.

*If your health care provider has not cleared you for independent physical activity and would like you to be monitored in a hospital setting or a medical fitness facility, you should exercise only under the supervision of a certified professional. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has two groups of certified fitness professionals that could meet your needs. The ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Specialist (CES) is certified to support those with heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. The ACSM Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RCEP) is qualified to support patients with a wide range of health challenges. You may locate all ACSM-certified fitness professionals by using the ProFinder at www.acsm.org.

For more information, visit www.exerciseismedicine.org or e-mail eim@acsm.org.

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