

# EXERCISING

WITH

## CHRONIC HEART FAILURE



*In the past decade, numerous studies have documented the safety and benefits of exercise for individuals living with chronic heart failure. Improving your ability to perform low-level activities can mean the difference between continuing to work and live independently and becoming disabled. The key to maximizing the benefits of exercise is to follow a well-designed program that accommodates your specific needs and concerns.*

### 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 mobility, your ability to perform activities of daily living, and your overall fitness.
- Choose low-impact activities such as walking, cycling or water exercises, which involve large muscles groups and can be done continuously. Low-intensity, longer-duration workouts are preferred over high-intensity activities.
- Start with shorter sessions (10 to 15 minutes) and gradually build up to 20 to 40 minutes, three or more days per week.
- Add high-repetition, low-resistance circuit training and range-of-motion stretching exercises two to three times per week.
- Take frequent breaks during activity if needed. Use the ratings of perceived exertion and dyspnea scales rather than heart rate to measure the intensity of your workouts.
- A prolonged warm-up and cool-down are recommended.

### Exercise Cautions

- Closely monitor your intensity level and adjust your workouts if you feel fatigued.
- Stop exercising immediately if you experience chest pain or angina. Contact your physician if you experience chest pain, labored breathing or extreme fatigue.
- You should not exercise if you have been diagnosed with obstruction to left ventricular outflow, decompensated chronic heart failure, or unstable dysrhythmias.

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](http://www.acsm.org).

For more information, visit [www.exerciseismedicine.org](http://www.exerciseismedicine.org) or e-mail [eim@acsm.org](mailto:eim@acsm.org).

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