

# EXERCISING

FOLLOWING

## A HEART ATTACK



*Exercise plays an important role in both the prevention and rehabilitation of many forms of cardiovascular disease, including a heart attack, because of its positive effect on many of the risk factors for heart disease, including high blood pressure and cholesterol, diabetes and obesity. Aerobic exercise, in particular, increases blood flow throughout the body and reduces the strain on your heart 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 provider about integrating regular exercise into your treatment plan.
- Take all medications as prescribed by your physician.
- Choose low-impact activities such as walking, cycling or water exercises, which involve large muscles groups and can be done continuously.
- Start slowly and gradually progress the intensity and duration of your workouts.
- If your fitness level is low, start with shorter sessions (5 to 15 minutes) and gradually add five minutes to your workouts every two to four weeks. Ideally, you should build up to 30 to 60 minutes, at least three to four days per week.
- Take frequent breaks during activity if needed. Your workouts should be comfortable and not strained.

### Exercise Cautions

- Always check with your physician prior to increasing your activity level.
- Closely monitor your intensity level and stay within the exercise heart rate range prescribed by your health care provider.
- Stop exercising immediately if you experience chest pain or angina. Contact your physician if you experience chest pain, labored breathing or extreme fatigue.
- 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](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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