

# EXERCISING

WITH

## VALVULAR HEART DISEASE



*Exercise plays an important role in both the prevention and rehabilitation of many forms of cardiovascular disease, including valvular heart disease, because of its positive effect on many of the contributing factors, including high blood pressure and cholesterol, diabetes and obesity. While exercise won't improve the mechanical function of a valve, it will improve your ability to perform everyday activities 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 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 your ability to perform activities of daily living, increase muscle strength and endurance, improve range of motion, and reduce your risk of injury.
- 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.
- Take frequent breaks during activity if needed. Your workouts should be comfortable and not strained.

### Exercise Cautions

- Avoid strength training if you have significant aortic stenosis and pulmonic stenosis.
- Closely monitor your intensity level and stay within your recommended target heart-rate zone.
- Stop exercising immediately if you experience chest pain or angina. Contact your physician if you experience chest pain, labored breathing or extreme fatigue.

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.

#### IN THE SERIES:

- > Cardiovascular Diseases
- > Pulmonary Diseases
- > Metabolic Diseases
- > Immunological/ Hematological Disorders
- > Orthopedic Diseases and Disabilities
- > Neuromuscular Disorders

\*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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