

# BE ACTIVE

Of all the lifestyle changes you can make for your heart health, physical activity is one of the simplest. Studies show that people who are physically active after a heart event live longer and have a better quality of life than those are not active.

This chapter will help you get started on the road to becoming more active.



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

This chapter will provide you with:

- Information on how to become and stay more active
- An overview of the heart health benefits of being physically active
- Guidelines for getting started with a physical activity program
- An outline of symptoms to be aware of while exercising

# EXERCISE IS MEDICINE FOR YOUR HEART

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If physical activity was a pill, it would be the most prescribed. Of all the steps you can take to improve your heart health or reduce your risk factors, being active is one of the most important.

Physical activity is anything you do throughout the day where your body is moving – from light activities such as housework and shopping to more strenuous activities such as brisk walking, bicycling, dancing or swimming. Regular physical activity can help to:

- lower blood pressure
- increase HDL (good) cholesterol
- lower blood sugar in people with diabetes
- maintain weight and trim inches from your waistline (even when the scale isn't budging)
- boost self-esteem
- improve quality of life
- reduce stress

Physical activity benefits everyone, regardless of age, gender, race, weight or fitness level. The more active you can be, the more you can reduce your risk of further heart and other health problems. This doesn't mean you need to run marathons to improve your heart health. Some people think only a high intensity gym exercise can benefit your heart – the fact is that every bit of physical activity counts and something as simple as increasing the amount you walk each day can improve your health.

## **HOW DOES BEING ACTIVE HELP MY HEART?**

Your heart is a muscle about the size of a closed fist. If you are not physically active, your small-sized heart muscle must work much harder to pump oxygen-rich blood to other out-of-shape muscles in your body that require more oxygen than those in shape. As a result, your heart ends up working harder to pump higher amounts of oxygen to the out-of-shape muscles, which can lead to an increase in heart rate and high blood pressure.

During physical activity, the heart, lungs and blood vessels supply oxygen to your body's exercising muscles for fuel. This increased oxygen demand causes faster breathing and makes your heart beat faster. As you continue to be physically active on a regular basis, your body will improve its ability to take in and use the oxygen provided and your muscles will require less oxygen as they become in better physical shape.

# BECOMING MORE ACTIVE

## SIT LESS, MOVE MORE

Most adults spend more than half their waking hours sitting. The first step to becoming more active is to decrease the amount of time you spend sitting throughout the day and replace this time with light activities. Use the table below to think about time you spend sitting for more than 20 minutes during the day.

	WORKDAY EXAMPLE	YOUR DAY
 BREAKFAST	15 minutes	
 TRANSPORT TO WORK	30 minutes	
 WORK ON COMPUTER	3.5 hours	
 LUNCH	30 minutes	
 WORK ON COMPUTER	4 hours	
 TRANSPORT FROM WORK	45 minutes	
 EVENING MEAL	30 minutes	
 EVENING	2 hours (Watching TV, browsing Internet)	
<b>TOTAL SITTING HOURS</b>	12 hours	

Sitting for long periods of the day can be harmful – even for those who do structured exercise. Becoming physically active starts with taking small steps towards moving your body more – doing so regularly will help make these small steps turn into daily habits.

The table below outlines some opportunities for you to include activity into the things you already do during the day:

AT HOME / WHILE SHOPPING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Stand up and walk around the house during commercials.</li><li>– Household chores, such as folding clothes, washing dishes or ironing, while watching television.</li><li>– Stand to read the morning newspaper.</li><li>– Move around the house when checking text messages and emails on your mobile phone.</li><li>– Practice your balance before breakfast, lunch and dinner.</li><li>– Take some extra laps around the grocery store. It's a great place to get in some extra walking.</li><li>– Pick up some resistance tubing and do strength training during commercials. Talk to your clinical exercise physiologist about how to get started.</li></ul>
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AT WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Stand and take a break from the computer every 20 minutes.</li><li>– Take breaks from sitting during long meetings.</li><li>– Stand to greet a visitor to your workspace.</li><li>– Use the stairs.</li><li>– Stand during phone calls.</li><li>– Walk to your colleague's desk instead of a phone call or email.</li><li>– Drink more water, going to the water cooler and toilet will break up sitting time.</li><li>– Move your garbage bin away from your desk so you can get up to put something in it.</li><li>– Use a height-adjustable desk so you can work standing or sitting.</li><li>– Have standing or walking meetings.</li><li>– Use headsets or the speakerphone during teleconferences so you can stand.</li><li>– Eat your lunch away from your desk.</li><li>– Stand at the back of the room during presentations.</li></ul>
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- Leave your car at home and take public transport so you walk to and from stops/stations.
- Walk or cycle at least part way to your destination.
- Park your car further away and walk the rest of the way to your destination.
- Plan regular breaks during long car trips.
- On public transport, stand and offer your seat to a person who really needs it.
- Get on/off public transit one stop/station earlier.
- Wash your car by hand rather than using a drive through car wash.
- Work on your core strength at stop lights by pulling in your belly button towards your spine. Remember to breathe!

### MOVE MORE → START WALKING

When you are feeling comfortable with the additional activity you have built into your daily routine, the next step is to include more structure and continuous activity. Walking is a great place to start. One of the great things about walking is that you do not require any special equipment other than a pair of good quality walking or running shoes.

Start by keeping track of all the walking you currently do throughout a normal day. Try to make your goal to accumulate at least 30 minutes of walking throughout the day for most, if not all, days. This could look like:

- One 30-minute walk = 30 minutes total
- Or two 15-minute walks = 30 minutes total
- Or three 10-minute walks = 30 minutes total

One way to keep track of the amount of walking you do is by using a pedometer or step counter. This can be a small device that clips on to your waistband, a step counter app on your smartphone, or a feature on your heart rate monitor. To start, here are a few simple steps:

- Get a baseline step number:
  - Wear your pedometer for a few days to find out what your average steps per day is. From there, you can set goals to increase your steps per day.
- A good starting goal is to increase your steps per day by 500 and maintain that level for a couple of weeks. Once you feel comfortable at your new step level, you can try to add on another 500 steps.

A pedometer costs around \$40 and can be purchased at most sports stores.

- A good long-term goal is to reach 10,000 or more steps each day. How far is 10,000 steps? Approximately 8 kilometres (5 miles).



### **ADD IN STRUCTURED AEROBIC EXERCISE**

Aerobic exercise is another important type of physical activity that can help improve your heart health and fitness level. This type of activity pushes your body to a moderate/somewhat hard intensity so that you are breathing harder, but still able to carry on a conversation without gasping for air. Walking can be an aerobic exercise if you walk at a brisk pace. Because aerobic exercise is more strenuous than light activities, it challenges your body in a new way and causes your muscles and cardiovascular system to adapt and become stronger. It also helps your body learn to use oxygen more efficiently so that there is less stress on your heart.

### **HOW MUCH AEROBIC EXERCISE SHOULD YOU DO?**

Including aerobic exercise in your weekly activity routine is an important way to improve your heart health. Your goal is to eventually accumulate 150 minutes or more each week at a moderate/somewhat hard intensity, in addition to the activity you do at lower intensities. Aerobic exercise will provide the most benefit if you do it 3-5 days a week.

If aerobic exercise is new to your routine, start with a goal of spending 20 minutes at a moderate/somewhat hard intensity, plus a 5-minute warm up and 5-minute cool-down on 3 days each week. If you find 20 minutes to be too challenging, you can break this up into two 10-minute sessions, just make sure to warm up and cool-down each time.

#### WHAT TYPE OF AEROBIC EXERCISE IS BEST?

The best type of aerobic exercise is the type you enjoy and will continue to be motivated to do. People often think that aerobic exercise must be done on a treadmill or other type of exercise equipment. The truth is that just about anything that gets your body moving can be aerobic exercise if you are able to get to a moderate/somewhat hard intensity and maintain it. This can include different aerobic exercises such as walking, jogging, biking, swimming, hiking, drumming, dancing and others will give you the most benefit by challenging different muscles.

The FITT principle is a set of simple rules to help you get the most out of your exercise program:

<b>F</b> requency	➔	How often	➔	3-5 times per week
<b>I</b> ntensity	➔	How hard	➔	Moderate/somewhat hard intensity
<b>T</b> ime	➔	How long	➔	20-60 minutes per day Goal: 150 minutes per week
<b>T</b> ype	➔	What are you doing	➔	Walking, jogging, biking, swimming, dancing

# GETTING STARTED WITH AEROBIC EXERCISE

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To get the most benefit out of your aerobic exercise session, and ensure safety, always start with a warm up, monitor your intensity during the training phase, and finish with a cool-down period.

## **WARM UP PERIOD**

Each time you exercise, you should include a 5 to 10-minute warm up period to open up your blood vessels gradually and supply more blood to your working muscles. A proper warm up can help to prevent muscular injuries and keep your heart safe. The warm up helps to increase and control your heart rate and blood pressure from a resting level to the level needed for the training phase of your exercise session. To warm up, do the activity you are about to do but at a slower pace. For example, before starting a brisk walk, slowly increase your pace every 30-60 seconds for 5-10 minutes up to a moderate/somewhat hard intensity.

## **TRAINING PHASE**

During this portion of your exercise session, you work at a moderate/somewhat hard intensity. For some people this will correspond to a specific target heart rate zone. In order for your heart to become stronger, it has to beat faster than usual for a minimum of 10-minutes and preferably longer. It is safe to spend as much as 60 minutes at this intensity 3 to 5 times a week. This can be done all at once or broken into multiple sessions of 10 or more minutes.

Since each person has a different fitness level, a moderate/somewhat hard intensity exercise can vary. For example, some people might feel like walking is moderately/somewhat hard intensity while others might find it to be very light intensity.

There are three ways to tell if you are working at a moderate/somewhat hard intensity as outlined in following table:

## WAYS TO MEASURE INTENSITY

1

### Talk Test

- Easiest way to monitor your intensity
- When working at a moderate level you should be able to carry on a conversation and comfortably say 4 or 5 words without gasping for air
  - Light intensity: You can sing a song
  - Hard intensity: Gasping for air, unable to speak → start slowing down! You are likely working at too high of an intensity, and the risk of the exercise may be outweighing the benefit.

2

### Ratings of Perceived Exertion (RPE Scale)

- Using a scale from 6-20 (see scale on next page)
  - 6 = sitting on a couch watching TV → too easy
  - 20 = being chased by a grizzly bear → too hard
- Goal for exercise would be 11-16 → moderate/somewhat hard intensity

3

### Heart Rate Monitor

- During your exercise stress test, a clinical exercise physiologist will review your results with the doctor to potentially provide a target heart rate\*
- A target heart rate is the ideal training zone for you to exercise at based on:
  - Heart rates reached during the exercise stress test
  - Medical history
  - Medications
  - Previous exercise history and goals

*\*A target heart rate may not be ideal for everyone. Instead some people might be encouraged to use the talk test or RPE scale instead.*

- A heart rate monitor is like a speedometer. It tells you how fast your heart is beating. Many models have a strap that is worn around your chest that wirelessly transmits to a watch.

RPE Scale:

20	Maximal exertion	
19	Extremely hard	19: For most people, this is the most strenuous exercise they have experienced.
18		<i>Unable to speak</i>
17	Very hard	17: Very strenuous. A healthy person can continue but must push themselves. It feels very heavy and the person is tired.
16		
15	Hard (heavy)	
14		11-16: Somewhat hard exercise but still feels ok to continue. This is the intensity range you should aim for during your exercise sessions.
13	Somewhat hard	
12		<i>Able to speak short sentences</i>
11	Fairly light	
10		
9	Very light	7-9: For most people, this is like walking slowly at own pace. Your warm up and cool-down should fall in this zone.
8	Extremely light	<i>Able to sing</i>
7	Very, very light	
6	No exertion at all	

**BE SAFE!**

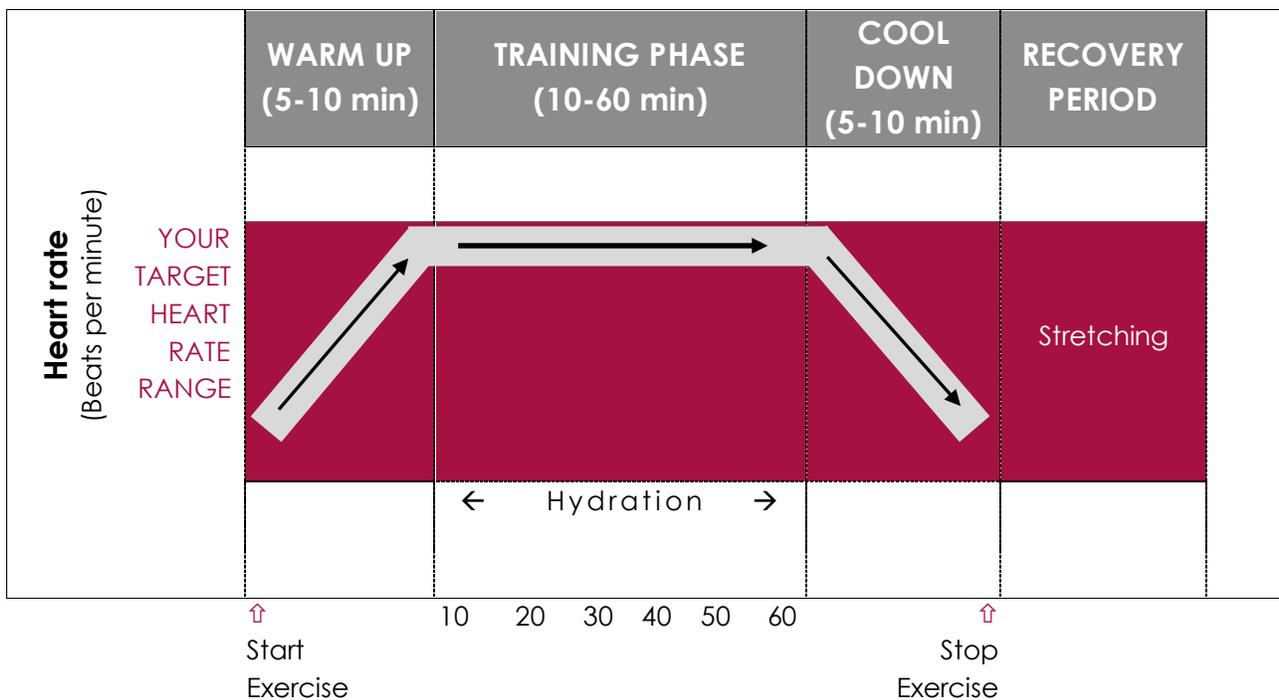
- Do not exceed your target heart rate without talking to a clinical exercise physiologist.
- If you feel like your target heart rate is too easy or too hard, talk to a clinical exercise physiologist.

If the target heart rate you have been given does not allow you to pass the talk test or puts you too high or low on the RPE scale, it is important to let your healthcare team know. If you are not able to reach your prescribed target heart rate while exercising at a moderate/somewhat hard intensity, let your healthcare team know – do not push yourself above a moderate/somewhat hard intensity using the RPE scale and talk test in an effort to reach your target. There are several factors that can affect your heart rate response to exercise so be sure to use RPE scale and the talk test to monitor your intensity.

### COOL DOWN

Much like the warm up, the cool down is also important. It helps to gradually slow down your heart rate closer to your resting heart rate and to bring the blood that went to your working muscles back to your heart to avoid pooling in arms and legs. If you don't take enough time to cool down you can put an increased stress on your heart and might feel unwell after exercise (e.g. lightheaded).

When you put the three phases together – warm up, training phase, cool-down – your aerobic exercise session should look something like the diagram below:



# GETTING THE MOST OUT OF AEROBIC EXERCISE

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Studies have shown that aerobic exercise helps people to live longer and that training at a moderate intensity/somewhat hard intensity (within your target heart rate range) has the biggest benefit for your heart health and fitness. Slowly progressing the duration (number of minutes) and frequency (number of days) will make aerobic exercise feel harder and is a safe way to challenge your heart.

You may have heard of a fitness 'plateau'. This happens when you have been doing the same **amount and type** of exercise for a period of time and your body is no longer challenged enough to have further fitness improvements. As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, exercise is medicine and, like other medical therapies such as medications you are prescribed, the 'dosage' of your aerobic exercise may be changed over time. Therefore, it is so important to include variety in your exercise routine, and to focus on progression.

Progression is the act of gradually increasing the amount of exercise you are already doing. There is no right or wrong amount of exercise to start with. When starting your aerobic exercise program, you want to choose 3 days of the week and exercise at a moderate/somewhat hard intensity as long as you feel comfortable. It doesn't matter if this is a short amount of time – remember that you are taking a positive step towards exercising more. The key is to start at a level that is comfortable for you. Starting too high – either a training phase that is too long or exercising too many days a week – can leave you feeling overly fatigued after exercise, unable to recover and gain the benefits from exercise, and can decrease your motivation.

- Progressing your **duration** means adding on 2 to 5 minutes in the training phase of each exercise session every week as you feel ready. The maximum amount of time you want to exercise at a moderate intensity is 60 minutes per day (not including your warm up and cool-down).
- Progressing your **frequency** means adding another day of exercise each week, up to a maximum of 6 days. When you add another day you might consider doing a slightly shorter session until you get used to exercising on an additional extra day.

To improve your aerobic cardiovascular fitness, it is best to train at a moderate/somewhat hard intensity within your target heart rate. Training above this level is not safe.

When working towards 150 minutes per week, you could do 3 sessions of 50 minutes, 5 sessions of 30 minutes, or any combination that works for you. The key is to find something that works for you and you will be motivated to stick with long-term.

Including too much aerobic exercise can put you at risk for overuse injuries, mental exhaustion and take away the valuable rest time your body needs to gain exercise benefits and become stronger. If you feel like you can do more than 60 minutes each day, 6 days of the week, try to focus on challenging yourself by increasing your lighter activities throughout the day (below your target heart rate or moderate/somewhat hard intensity), or adding new types of aerobic exercise in to your routine. Talk to your clinical exercise physiologist for other ideas on how to feel challenged by your exercise.

### **HIGHER INTENSITY ACTIVITIES**

Higher intensity activities are those activities that are too difficult to maintain at your target heart rate zone or a 'moderate/somewhat hard' level, such as hockey, downhill skiing, racquet sports, and strength training. These activities should be avoided after a heart event or surgery until discussed with your healthcare provider.

After a period of time, some people feel like they want to challenge themselves at a higher intensity, but the risk may be greater than the benefit. High intensity activities put an increased demand on your heart and lungs and can increase your heart rate and blood pressure to unsafe levels.

High intensity activities may require maximum effort and frequent rest periods. If getting back to doing these activities is important to you, the first step is to improve your aerobic and cardiovascular fitness by training at a moderate/somewhat hard intensity. As you build your aerobic fitness level through moderate-intensity exercise, your heart and lungs work more efficiently to provide oxygen to your working muscles and your body improves its ability to use the oxygen provided. The higher your fitness level, the less demand high intensity activities place on your heart and lungs.

Although you might not get back to participating in these activities at the same level as you did in the past, you can work with your clinical exercise physiologist to develop a plan to safely reach your goals. It is important to ensure that high intensity activities never replace an aerobic exercise session. Make sure that you

only include them when you have a consistent aerobic exercise routine and you have been cleared to do them by a healthcare provider.

### **STRENGTH TRAINING**

One unique type of high intensity activity is strength training – also called resistance training – which uses resistance, such as hand weights, tubing or body weight to help build muscle. While aerobic exercise is great for strengthening your heart, lungs and muscles, muscular fitness through strength training keeps your muscles strong and can also help to increase your fitness level.

As we get older, our muscles lose strength and flexibility. Regular strength training can help to increase bone and muscle strength and reduce your risk of injury during physical activity. Although beneficial, strength training is not safe for everyone. If you plan to include strength training as part of your exercise routine, please speak with a clinical exercise physiologist to help develop a program that incorporates safe exercises.

### **FLEXIBILITY TRAINING**

Stretching is the best way to promote and maintain flexibility and range of motion. Stretching regularly becomes even more important as you start an aerobic exercise program as your muscles might become tighter and more prone to injury than they used to be. Including stretching after you exercise can maintain and potentially increase your flexibility and decrease muscle soreness. Stretching can be performed every day. When performing stretches, try to hold each position for a minimum of 15 seconds and avoid bouncing during the stretch. Relax and breathe normally holding a stretch. You should never feel any pain when stretching, rather a light pull in your muscle.

# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER FOR HEART HEALTH

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Now that you know more about the steps to becoming more active – sit less/move more, start walking and include structured aerobic exercise – it's time to start laying the groundwork for a more active lifestyle.

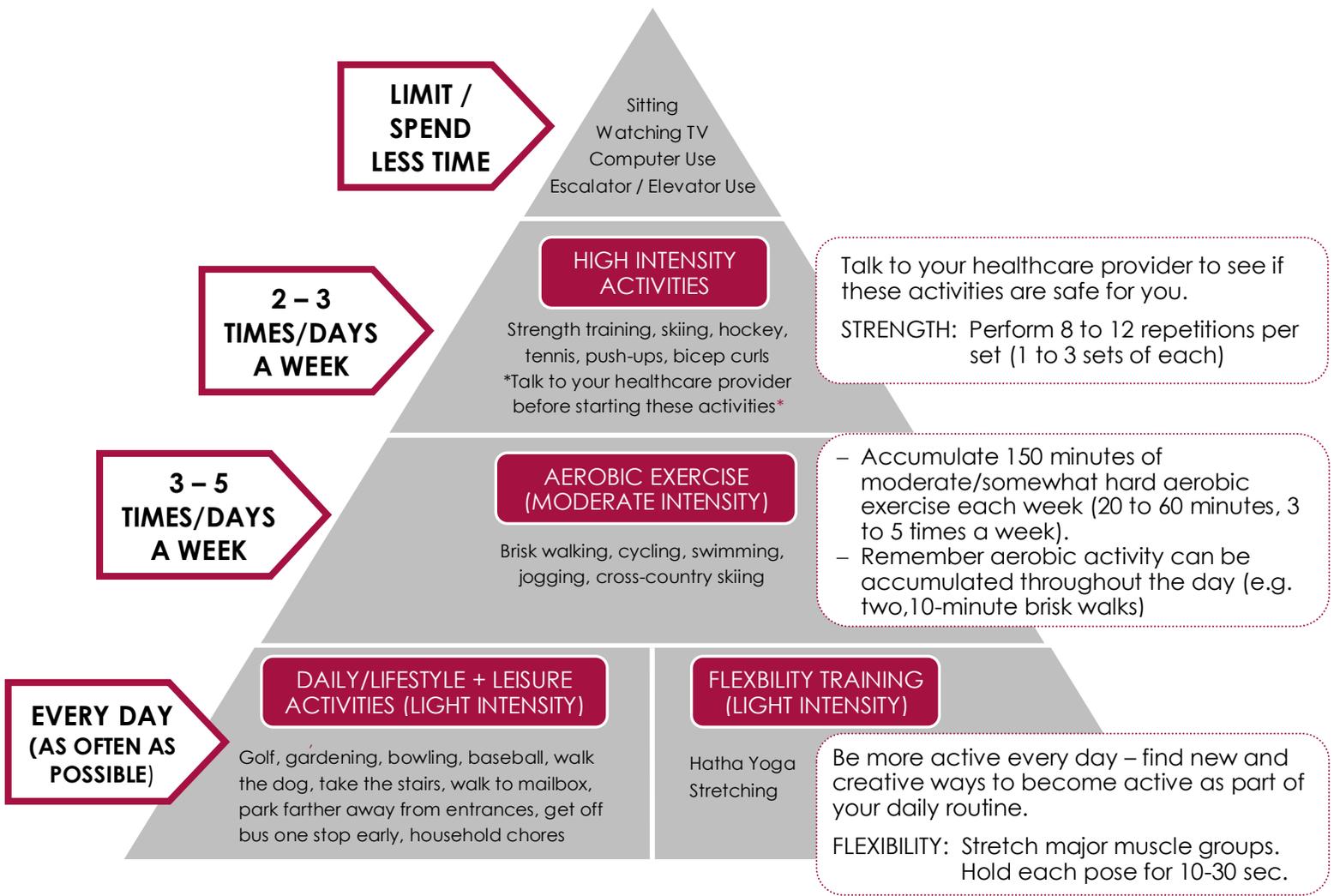
As discussed earlier in the chapter, the foundation for becoming more active starts with increasing the light-intensity activities you do throughout your day. While both somewhat hard/moderate-intensity aerobic exercise and lighter 'everyday' activities have unique benefits for your heart and body, it is important to continue with light activities even when you start an aerobic exercise program. Sitting less and moving more in your daily routine is the basis upon which active living is built.

The activity pyramid on the next page illustrates how to incorporate the various types of activities discussed in this chapter into a week. It also incorporates the FITT principle:

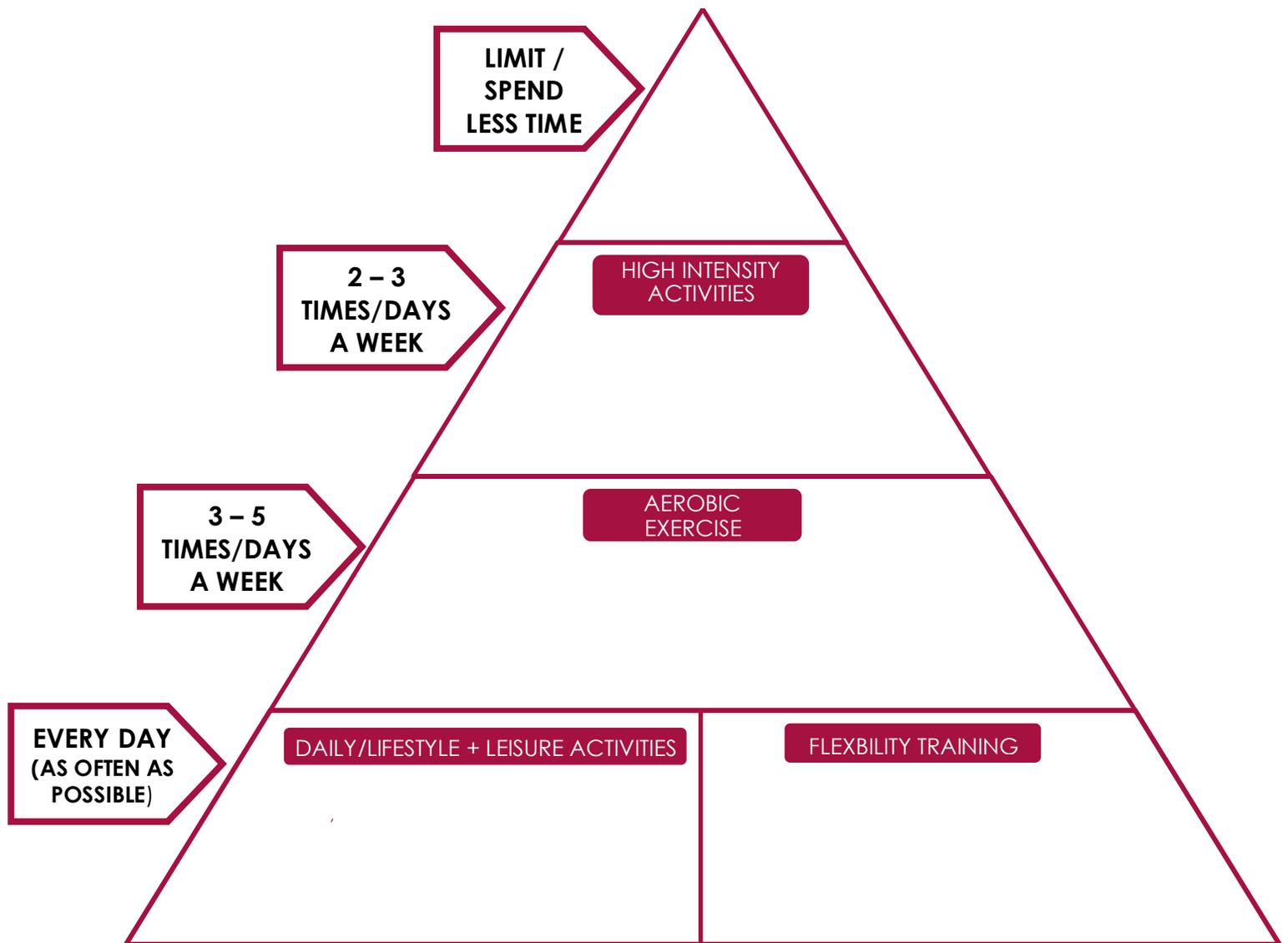
<b>F</b> requency	➔	How often	➔	3-5 times per week
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<b>T</b> ime	➔	How long	➔	20-60 minutes per day
<b>T</b> ype	➔	What are you doing	➔	Walking, jogging, biking, swimming

- The base of the pyramid – the largest area – is devoted to those lighter-intensity activities that should be done more often. These everyday activities are the foundation on which you become more active.
- The middle levels of the pyramid include moderate/somewhat hard intensity aerobic exercises and higher-intensity strength activities that you can build into your week as you become more active and you receive guidelines from your clinical exercise physiologist or doctor.
- The top level of the pyramid – the smallest area – shows those activities that you should do less often.

If you are just starting out, it is not realistic to meet all of the recommendations outlined in the pyramid. A reasonable starting goal is to focus on being more active in your everyday activities, choose light-intensity leisure activities (and sit less), and try to incorporate some regular physical activity from the middle levels each week, even if you don't meet all the recommendations.



NOT ACTIVE	SOMETIMES PHYSICALLY ACTIVE	PHYSICALLY ACTIVE ON A REGULAR BASIS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start with activities at the bottom of the pyramid. Try to increase amount of everyday activities.</li> <li>- Walk whenever you can to work towards 10,000 steps a day.</li> <li>- Start with 500 steps a day. When you are comfortable with that, add another 500 steps.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be more consistent with activities in the middle of the pyramid.</li> <li>- Schedule physical activity in your day.</li> <li>- Try new activities to find ones that you enjoy – the more you enjoy an activity, the more likely you are to stick with it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Choose a mix of activities from all levels of the pyramid.</li> <li>- Change your routine periodically to prevent boredom and keep activity fun.</li> <li>- Try new physical activities.</li> </ul>



**Now it's your turn.**

Using the blank pyramid above, take a moment and write down your everyday activities. Then add what structured aerobic and flexibility activities you plan to build into your week.

# EXERCISE BARRIERS AND SET BACKS

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It is normal to go through times where it is difficult to include physical activities in your weekly routine. Setbacks are normal and should be expected. While exercising less than you planned can be discouraging, getting back on track the next day or week is what's important.

Some of the more common obstacles to aerobic exercise and tips for you to overcome them are outlined below. Finding exercises you enjoy is key. You are less likely to be active if you are doing things you do not enjoy.

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*"I don't have time to exercise"*

- Focus on shorter bouts of exercise. Try to get out for a 10 minute walk a few times throughout the day. Even if you don't have time for a structured exercise session you will see benefits from shorter bouts of walking.
- Schedule exercise like you would for an appointment. Add it to your day timer or smartphone calendar.

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*"It is too expensive to join a gym"*

- Focus on walking. Whether outdoors or at a mall this is an inexpensive and simple form of exercise.
- Be more active at home. This could include walking, stair climbing, stretching, and strength exercises using your body weight (push-ups, squats, lunges).

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*"I travel a lot"*

- Walk the hallways and stairwells of your hotel or choose accommodations that have a fitness facility or pool.
- Take the stairs at the hotel instead of the elevator.

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*"I have pain in my muscles and joints"*

- Try different activities to find something that does not cause you pain. Never push through pain or discomfort of any kind.
  - Try swimming or water aerobics which can help take the pressure off your joints and decrease pain.
  - Try stretching after exercise and possibly using heat or ice on sore muscles or joints.
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# MAKING EXERCISE SAFE FOR YOU

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As you learned throughout this chapter, exercise benefits your heart and overall health in a number of ways. Whether active in your daily living or exercising on a regular basis, there are some general safety guidelines to keep in mind to ensure you are exercising safely:

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and nicotine (patch, inhaler or cigarettes) and cannabis products 3 hours before and 1 hour after activity or exercise.
- Avoid saunas, hot tubs or hot showers after activity or exercise.
- Avoid activity/exercise during illness or infection.
- Try to eat a well-balanced meal at least 2 hours before activity. If this is not possible, eat a small snack or avoid activity or exercise when you have not eaten (or eaten enough).
- Medications should be taken at least 1.5 to 2 hours before exercise. If you have questions about the timing of your medications, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. If you are taking nitroglycerin to manage angina and experience chest pain during exercise, follow the nitroglycerin protocol outlined in the earlier chapter '*Heart Disease and You*'.
- Avoid exercising in temperature extremes. Extreme weather makes your heart work harder:

## COLD WEATHER

1. Heart rates increase and the heart works harder at rest and with exercise.
2. Blood vessels can tighten and constrict, possibly leading to increased blood pressure or angina.
3. Blood flow to your extremities can decrease to keep your core warm.

### COLD WEATHER TIPS

- Drink fluids to avoid dehydration
- Increase warm up and cooldown time
- Dress in layers to keep warm
- Wear a scarf over your mouth to warm the air you are breathing in

Shoveling is double duty for your body (and your heart) as it works to keep you warm and to meet the physical demands required from heavy lifting. This causes an increase in heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen demand, causing the heart to work more. To be safe, follow the cold weather tips above and stay below your target heart rate. Avoid 'throwing' the snow – push it instead. Check in with your body regularly to make sure you are not holding your breath and take frequent breaks as needed.

**WARM WEATHER:**

1. Heart rates increase to move blood from the heart, lungs, and other vital organs to the surface of the skin.
2. Sweating increases to disperse body heat through evaporation.
3. Opens your blood vessels, which can result in low blood pressures.

WARM WEATHER TIPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink fluids to avoid dehydration</li> <li>• Increase warm up and cool-down time</li> <li>• Dress in loose fitting, light weight and light-coloured clothing</li> <li>• Slow down and avoid strenuous activities during excessive heat</li> <li>• Exercise at a cool time of day or indoors with air conditioning</li> </ul>

**WATCH FOR WARNING SIGNS OF TOO MUCH ACTIVITY**

It is important that you recognize the difference between normal discomfort from exercising and symptoms that something might be wrong. The following table outlines normal and abnormal responses that can occur during exercise.

NORMAL RESPONSES	ABNORMAL RESPONSES
<p><b>Increased breathing</b></p> <p>It is normal for breathing to increase in rate and depth while exercising.</p> <p>This will be noticeable at the start of exercise and then should become more comfortable after 3-5 minutes of exercise.</p>	<p><b>Shortness of breath</b></p> <p>The feeling of not getting enough air or having difficulty catching your breath at rest or after stopping exercise</p>
<p><b>Leg Muscle Burning</b></p> <p>You may experience some burning or tiredness in your legs. This is normal with a muscle that is not used to exercising.</p> <p>You may experience some muscle soreness 2-3 days after exercise. These symptoms will decrease as fitness increases.</p>	<p><b>Discomfort in upper body</b></p> <p>Pain or discomfort from the heart may radiate into one or both arms, the back, neck or jaw</p>
<p><b>Sweating</b></p> <p>Sweating can help to regulate your body's temperature (cool you down) while exercising</p>	<b>Cold sweats</b>
	<b>Nausea</b>
	<b>Light-headedness</b>

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## **If I am really active at work, do I need to exercise?**

Being physically active through work or in your leisure time does have many health benefits. However, incorporating aerobic exercise into your weekly routine will further these benefits while also maintaining or even improving your cardiovascular health and fitness. This increased fitness will also allow you to perform work activities with less effort.

## **I have muscle and/or joint pain when I exercise. Should I still exercise?**

It depends on the origin of the muscle/joint pain. If the pain is new and the origin is unknown, then you should be assessed by your doctor before continuing to exercise. If you have been cleared to exercise with the pain, try to find a type of exercise that does not increase the pain. Doing a longer warm up and stretching might also help to minimize exercise-related pain. If it has been a long time since you have exercised, you may have some muscle pain for a few days after as your body adjusts to working these muscles in a new way.

## **Can I start lifting weights?**

Strength training can help to improve muscular strength and endurance. This increase will allow you to do activities such as carrying groceries or household chores with greater ease. Although beneficial, strength training is not safe for everyone – please talk to a clinical exercise physiologist about what exercises are appropriate for you.

## **What is the best type of exercise?**

This depends on the person doing the exercise. While a variety of exercises will help to work different muscle groups, it is important to find a type of exercise or activity that you enjoy. The best type of exercise is the one that you will do often.

## **Can I break my exercise into smaller parts?**

Yes. If you are not able to accumulate 30 minutes continuously because you are tired or do not have time, try to incorporate two 15-minute or three 10-minute sessions throughout the day. Every little bit counts!

## **Will sit-ups or crunches help me to lose the fat around my belly?**

Unfortunately, you cannot “spot” reduce fatty areas. Although abdominal exercises are important for improving core strength and low back stability, they do

not burn large amounts of calories to reduce excess fat; aerobic exercise is the best way to burn fat.

**If I sweat more, will I lose more weight because I am working harder?**

Sweating is not an indication that you are working at the right intensity. Unless you are training to tolerate a hot climate, you are better off minimizing the heat load on your body so that it can respond better to the exercise. Weight loss associated with sweating is mostly water weight, and excessive sweating without replacement of lost fluids can be dangerous to your body.

**When can I resume my exercise class?**

The decision of whether or not to resume an exercise class depends on many factors. Because classes are offered in everything from lighter styles of yoga to more intense classes such as group cycling, step aerobics, and Crossfit there is no specific time that is right to resume exercise classes. The decision will depend on how challenging the class is and whether or not you are able to modify it. Based on your current health status and exercise goals, a clinical exercise physiologist can provide you with recommendations on resuming exercise classes.

**Is it safe to do yoga?**

Yoga has many benefits, both physically and emotionally. It can help you to maintain strength and flexibility and can also help with relaxation and stress management. It is recommended that you choose slower-paced styles of yoga such as hatha or restorative and avoid faster paced styles such as ashtanga or power yoga until you discuss them with your clinical exercise physiologist.

Performing yoga in a heated room is not recommended for people with a heart condition as it can put an increased stress on your heart. To maximize the safety of yoga it is important to ensure you are breathing throughout the class and that you are not holding poses for long periods where your head is below your heart, such as downward dog or a headstand.

**Should I get a personal trainer? Will they keep my heart safe?**

Working with a personal trainer is an individual choice. Some people feel that it helps them to stay motivated and accountable with their exercise while others feel confident in their ability to exercise independently. When working with a personal trainer, always include a warm up and cool-down and never exceed your target heart rate level. If you are focusing mainly on strength training during your sessions

it is important that this is a supplement to your aerobic exercise and not a replacement.

When choosing a personal trainer, you should look for someone who is CPR certified and works at a facility with an AED. If possible, choose a trainer that is an ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Physiologist or a CSEP Certified Exercise Physiologist.

**Are the calories burned on a piece of exercise equipment accurate?**

No. Typically this reading overestimates the number of calories burned with exercise. You are better off setting goals based on how long you exercise rather than burning a specific number of calories.

**GROUP EXERCISE PROGRAMS**

There are several organizations in Calgary that offer various types of physical activity in group settings. These programs are an excellent way to meet exercise buddies and to figure out what types of physical activity you enjoy.

- **Kerby Centre:** Offers continuing education programs for older adults in areas such as physical fitness and lifestyle education. They also have drop-in activities like badminton and billiards. For more information, call 403-265-0661.
- **Repsol Sport Centre:** Offers exercise programs and classes for people of all ages and abilities. Note that the Repsol Sport Centre is not affiliated with TotalCardiology Rehabilitation. To find out more about the specific programs offered, call 403-233-8393 or visit <http://www.repsol sportcentre.com>. You can also talk to staff at the front desk of the Repsol Sport Centre the next time you are in for an appointment.
- **Move 'n Mingle Exercise Program:** Offers exercise classes for older adults (65+) who are disadvantaged by low income, culture, language, or social isolation. Call 403-955-1554.
- **Older Adult Group Exercise:** Group exercise for older adults at Westside Recreation Centre. Call 403-531-5875.

**ONLINE RESOURCES FOR BEING ACTIVE**

- My Fitness Pal: [www.myfitnesspal.com](http://www.myfitnesspal.com)
- Fit Day: [www.fitday.com](http://www.fitday.com)
- MedHelp Exercise Tracker: [www.medhelp.org/land/exercise-tracker](http://www.medhelp.org/land/exercise-tracker)
- Nike+ Running: [nikeplus.nike.com/plus/](http://nikeplus.nike.com/plus/)
- Polar Beat: [www.polar.fi/beat/](http://www.polar.fi/beat/)

**SMARTPHONE APPS**

- Bike YYC (iOS)
- Couch to 5k (iOS, Android)
- My Fitness Pal (iOS, Android)