

# PHYSICAL INACTIVITY AND HEART DISEASE

## HOW TO BECOME MORE ACTIVE AND REDUCE YOUR RISK OF HEART DISEASE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*Check where applicable*

- Think about why you are not more active.**
- Weigh the “pros” and “cons” of being inactive.**
- Plan to become more active:**
  - Decide how to fit more activity into your daily life.
  - Think about whether you want to be more active alone or with others.
  - Choose activities you enjoy.
  - Set realistic goals.
  - Plan rewards for yourself.
  - Always warm up before and cool down after.
  - Choose a starting date.
- Become more active:**
  - Adjust your goals if necessary.
  - Reward yourself.
  - Tell yourself you can do it.
  - Apply what you’ve learned from past successes.
- Stay active:**
  - Remember your reasons for becoming active.
  - Be ready with solutions for those times when you feel like stopping.

**PLAN TO BE ACTIVE 30 MINUTES OR MORE EVERY DAY.**

# SOME IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT PHYSICAL INACTIVITY AND HEART DISEASE

*Inactive people are twice as likely to have heart disease as active people.*

*Regular physical activity reduces your risk of heart disease.*

## ABOUT THIS PAMPHLET

This pamphlet will help you become more active, and it will give you support if you are active already. Since some people are more active than others, you'll find different kinds of information for inactive people and for people who are more active. This pamphlet will help you understand the stage you are at, and give you lots of practical tips to help you become more active when you want to. Read the next section to find out which part is for you.

### What stage are you at?

1.  I'm not thinking about becoming more active. Go to Section 1.
2.  I'm thinking about being more active. Go to Section 2.
3.  I'm active once in awhile, but not regularly. Go to Section 3.
4.  I've been active regularly for less than 6 months. Go to Section 4.
5.  I've been active regularly for 6 months or more. Go to Section 5.

### WHAT IS A GOOD TYPE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Any kind of physical activity can be good for your health, as long as you do it safely. To get the most out of being physically active, choose a variety of activities each week that will increase your endurance, flexibility, and strength.

Endurance activities help your heart, lungs, and circulatory system stay healthy and give you more energy. Walking, biking, dancing, and tennis are some examples of endurance activities. Flexibility activities help you to move easily. These activities include gentle reaching, bending and stretching of all your muscle groups. Gardening, mopping the floor, and stretching exercises are different types of flexibility activities. Strength activities help your muscles and bones stay strong and improve your posture. Strength activities make you work your muscles against some kind of resistance, like when you push or pull hard to open a heavy door. A few ways to increase your strength activities are climbing stairs, raking and carrying leaves, and doing exercises like push-ups.

### WHAT IS A GOOD LEVEL OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Most adults should have a total of at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week. Moderate activity means any activity that makes you breathe faster than normal but still lets you talk easily. If you choose less strenuous activities, you should aim for 60 minutes every day. Then, as you progress to more intense activities, you can cut down to 30 minutes. You don't have to do 30 or 60 minutes of activity all at once. You can add up your activities during the day. For greatest benefit, though, each period of activity should be at least 10 minutes long.

# SECTION ONE

## I'M NOT THINKING ABOUT BECOMING MORE ACTIVE

### WHY ARE YOU INACTIVE?

Here are some common reasons:

✘ **I don't have the time.**

If you are very busy, it may seem impossible to make time for physical activity. However, active people don't have any more free time than inactive people - they make the time.

An exercise class or a workout in a gym can be good, but **you can be active at home.**

Think about how much time you spend watching TV. In fact, you can even be active while you watch TV, for example, by riding an exercise bike or by step-walking. You can also be more active without taking much time by taking the stairs instead of the elevator, parking further from the entrance to stores or work, and walking or riding your bike whenever possible.

✘ **I don't have the energy to be more active.**

Many people say they don't have enough energy to be more active. **But the good news is: once you become a little more active, you will probably have more energy.** Being active doesn't take away energy; it gives you more.

✘ **I'm not interested.**

Some people have bad memories of exercising, with all the sweating, puffing,

panting and pain. In the past, "no pain, no gain" was a popular saying, but we now know that you don't have to feel pain to benefit from exercise! We're not telling you to become an athlete, but just to do more of the activities you already do, such as walking, dancing or gardening. So, think about how you could spend more time on activities you already do and enjoy.

✘ **Being physically active costs a lot of money.**

There are many ways to be active that cost nothing or very little. In fact, some activities can even save you money, such as leaving your car at home and walking to the store.

✘ **If I'm active, I'll hurt myself.**

If you start slowly and progress gradually, your chances of hurting yourself are very small. In fact, being active strengthens muscles and bones so you are less likely to get hurt **and** less likely to get sick. Becoming more active is very safe for most people.

### THINK ABOUT YOUR REASONS

You might agree with these reasons, or you might have others. Make a list of yours and think about how important they are to you.

#### Ask yourself:

- ✘ Why am I not more active?
- ✘ Why should I become more active?
- ✘ Do I want to be inactive for the rest of my life?

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# SECTION TWO

## I'M THINKING ABOUT BEING MORE ACTIVE

Bravo! This section will help you to move from thinking about being active to being ready to start.

Here are some tips:

- Pay attention to everything you hear about physical activity.

- Keep track of your reasons for becoming more active.
- Think about what you could do more of with the extra energy you'd have from being more active.

## TO BECOME ACTIVE OR NOT

You need to weigh the “pros” and the “cons” of being inactive. Think about how being inactive can hurt you, and think about how being more active can help you.

Being more active could benefit many parts of your life:

- ✗ your health
- ✗ your self-image
- ✗ your energy level
- ✗ your social life
- ✗ your ability to work
- ✗ what your family and friends think

## INACTIVITY CAN HURT

### Health Problems Inactive People May Have

- ✗ heart disease
- ✗ obesity
- ✗ diabetes
- ✗ lower amount of “good” cholesterol in your blood and higher levels of harmful cholesterol
- ✗ high blood pressure
- ✗ back problems
- ✗ osteoporosis (weakened bones)
- ✗ cancer of the colon

## ACTIVITY CAN HELP

*“Being active is good for your body and good for your mind!”*

### Benefits of Being Active

#### Physical Benefits

- ✗ weight control
- ✗ improved cholesterol levels
- ✗ less chance of developing high blood pressure
- ✗ less chance of developing diabetes
- ✗ less chance of developing osteoporosis

#### Mental Benefits

- ✗ relief from stress
- ✗ increased self-confidence
- ✗ relief from depression
- ✗ better sleep
- ✗ more energy

*“Being active is fun!”*

Being active can help to bring back those feelings of being young again. Children enjoy activities like running, jumping and skipping, but as adults, many of us have forgotten those joys. Doing your favourite activity with family and friends is fun.

*“Being active can make you feel more energetic!”*

Instead of having less energy, you will probably have more energy. Being active doesn’t take away energy; it gives you more.

If your “pros” of becoming more active outweigh your “cons,” congratulations! Now you can take the next step - making plans to be active. Read the next section to help you.

If your “cons” outweigh your “pros,” you now know some good reasons to become more active, and you know your reasons are not strong enough yet. You may be ignoring some of the risks that result from being inactive. You may need to pay more attention to how being inactive is affecting your health.

**Above all, remember that you do have what it takes to go one more step.**

# SECTION THREE

## I'M ACTIVE ONCE IN AWHILE, BUT NOT REGULARLY.

This section can help you become active on a regular basis. To do this, you'll need to do some planning.

### PLANNING TO BE MORE ACTIVE.

#### Fit more activity into your schedule.

Try to be aware of the little ways you could add more activity to your daily life. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, park further away from the store, or walk or bike to work instead of driving. These little things add up, and they can easily fit into your schedule.

Are you an early bird? Then go for a walk before your morning shower. If you like evenings best, you could join an evening walking club or take evening swimming lessons. Do whatever works for you and your schedule. Use the Activity Record on the back of this pamphlet to keep track of what you do and for how long.

**Plan to be active** alone or with a friend or someone in your family. Whatever works for you is fine.

#### Choose activities you enjoy.

Think about the activities you already enjoy. Then think about how you can do more of them. Or, you may want to try something new. Keep trying until you find a few activities you really like.

#### You can have fun and feel better by doing any of the following:

- Walk or ride a bike in your neighbourhood.
- Work in your garden.
- Use the athletic facilities at a local college, the "Y" or a community centre.
- Join a dance class.
- Enjoy team activities like volleyball or baseball.
- Play ball with your kids.
- Take swimming, badminton or tennis lessons.
- Try winter sports like skating, skiing, or tobogganing.

#### Set realistic goals.

Make your first goals simple so you can be sure to reach them. For example, set a goal of walking 3 times this week. Even if you only walk for 10 minutes each time, you will have met your goal. Next week, you might walk 3 times for 15 minutes each time. Setting realistic goals will help you feel good about yourself, and will help you keep up the good work!

#### Plan to reward yourself often.

Each time you meet one of your goals, give yourself a treat to mark the occasion:

- Visit a friend.
- Spend more time on your favourite hobby.
- Take a long, hot bath.
- Go to a movie.
- Buy yourself new sneakers!

#### Play it safe.

- Before you begin every time, do some slow stretching and a warm up for at least 5 minutes. During your warm up, do what you are about to do but at a slower pace. For example, before a brisk walk, start with 5 minutes of slow walking.
- Always cool down for at least 5 minutes at the end to get your body back to normal slowly and gently.
- To get the maximum benefits, make the main part of your activity session last for about 20 minutes.

*You will probably be breathing a little heavier than usual. This is OK. To know that you are not pushing yourself too hard, **make sure that you can still carry on a conversation as you exercise.** This is the "talk test."*

*If you feel pain, stop! In case of chest pain, dizziness, or fainting, **you also need to call your doctor as soon as possible.***

#### Choose a starting date.

Pick a firm date when you are going to start.

# SECTION FOUR

## I'VE BEEN ACTIVE REGULARLY FOR LESS THAN 6 MONTHS.

You should be proud of yourself! You have succeeded in becoming active on a regular basis.

### HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO HELP YOU "KEEP GOING."

#### Remind yourself *why* you started to be active.

(You'll find a list of the benefits in Section Two.)

#### Play it safe.

For endurance activities, begin with light activities and progress to more intense activities later if you like. When doing endurance activities:

- Use comfortable footwear that provides good cushioning and support.
- Wear comfortable clothing that suits your activity (and the weather).
- Use safety gear approved by the Canadian Standards Association whenever appropriate, such as a helmet for biking.

#### Find ways to stay motivated.

- *Set realistic goals to stay motivated.*

Goals let you see your progress. Set yourself both short-term and long-term goals. Your long-term goals are what you want to get from your activity - it could be more energy or lower blood pressure or better control of your weight. Your short-term goals are the steps to getting there. Think about your short-term goal and break it into small, easy parts. For example, you could decide to take a 15-minute walk 3 times a week. Each short-term goal takes you closer to your long-term goal. If you don't meet your short-term goals, try again or change them a little so they are easier to achieve. And if you are having trouble reaching your long-term goal, it may also need to be adjusted.

- *Stay motivated by doing a variety of activities.*

Choose a variety of activities from each of the three activity groups: endurance activities, flexibility activities, and strength activities.

Changing activities will also help prevent boredom and give some of your muscles a rest.

Even if you just do endurance activities, there are many ways to keep it fun. If you love walking, change your route, walk indoors at a mall, listen to music on headphones, or invite some friends along for a change of pace!

- *Stay motivated by rewarding yourself.*

You may have already experienced some of the rewards of being active such as feeling more relaxed and having more energy. You can also reward yourself with something extra when you reach a goal. These rewards don't have to be big things; small things are often easy to do and just as enjoyable. For some ideas on how to reward yourself, read Section Three.

#### Tell yourself you can do it.

Don't worry if you get discouraged sometimes or if you have stopped exercising for a few days. This can happen if you get sick or if there is a sudden change in your life. Try to get back into a routine as soon as possible. You can keep it going!





**Here are some solutions to some problems you might run into:**

**“The weather is bad.”**

Always have a back-up plan. If you like to walk, join a mall walking club in winter. If you like to bicycle, ride an exercise bike during the cold or windy months. Or, pick an activity for each season: swim in summer, bicycle in spring and fall, and walk at the mall in winter. Remember; there are lots of good indoor activities.

**“I hurt myself last time.”**

If you listen to what your body is telling you, and if you do a warm up before and a cool down after, you shouldn't get hurt. And if do you injure yourself, see your doctor. Follow your doctor's advice on how long you should wait until you begin again. Mild injuries are not usually a reason to stop all activity.

**“I don't feel like it; I'm in a bad mood.”**

Being active can improve your mood. It helps relieve stress and sadness, and it's a great way to burn off steam!

**“I'm on vacation.”**

There are lots of ways to stay active while you're on vacation. Walking in a new city is a great way to get some activity and see things firsthand. Hotels also often have pools and fitness rooms you can use.

**Make things easy for yourself.**

Some people plan to exercise after work but something always comes up when they go home to get their exercise clothes. The answer to this is to bring a change of clothes to work and head straight from work. If you're very busy, mark off time in your calendar - for being active.

**Think about your past successes.**

Think of a time when you found it hard to do something you needed to do (for example, getting to work on time). What methods did you use then that might help you stick with your plan to exercise now? You've done well in the past and you can do it again!



## SECTION FIVE

### I'VE BEEN ACTIVE REGULARLY FOR 6 MONTHS OR MORE.

Good for you! Your challenge is to remain active for good.

- Remember why you became active in the first place. (You'll find other benefits of being active in Section Two.)
- Plan ahead to stay active. (In Section Four, you'll find some tips to “keep going.”)
- Think ahead about your own circumstances.

**Answer the following questions.**

Have you ever stopped being active in the past?

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Why did you stop?

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What did you do to get started again?

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What is likely to be a problem for you now?

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What can you do to prepare for this?

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What will help you get back on track if you stop?

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*Get active your way every day for life - it's easier than you think!*

# ACTIVITY RECORD

Use this Activity Record to keep track of what you do and for how long.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Day	Time of day	Activity	How long (in minutes)	Total time (in minutes)
<b>Example</b>  →	<i>Morning</i>	<i>Fast walking</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>30</i>
	<i>Afternoon</i>	<i>Played with kids</i>	<i>10</i>	
	<i>Evening</i>	<i>Cycled</i>	<i>10</i>	
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

There are resources in your community to help you become more active and control other risk factors for heart disease. Check the “yellow pages” or “blue pages” of your phone book for local recreation centres or contact (at no charge):

- Heart and Stroke Foundation: 1-888-HSF-INFO (473-4636) or [www.hsf.ca](http://www.hsf.ca)
- “Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living”: 1-888-334-9769 or [www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)

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