



# Why People with Heart Failure Should Keep 'Active'

## What does it mean to be 'active'?

Activity and exercise - People often use these two terms to mean the same thing. All physical activities and exercise do involve increasing the heart rate and strengthening muscles.

There is, however, a small difference in their meanings. Physical activity is when you are using energy to move your body to get from place to place. Exercise is a type of physical activity. The difference is - exercise is planned. We exercise to improve or maintain fitness or health.

## Why activity is important

Keeping active is one of the best ways to keep healthy. Any amount of activity is better than none at all.

Keeping active helps you:

- ✓ Sleep better
- ✓ Feel less tired
- ✓ Feel less breathless
- ✓ Feel more confident and in control



Studies show that daily activity is good for you. It can help you to live better and longer.

## Getting started

- ♥ Always check with your health care provider first before starting an activity to make sure you find an activity that matches your personal needs and ability.
- ♥ Start off slowly and pace yourself.

## Is the activity level right for me?

Get to know your body. It is important that you feel comfortable doing the activity.



As long as you can talk without being too short of breath the level of activity is okay.

## Balance activity and rest

- ♥ Be active at a time when you feel rested, such as first thing in the morning or after nap.
- ♥ Choose which activities to do each day.
- ♥ Spread your activities throughout your day.
- ♥ If you are tired after an activity or the next day, then you have tried to do too much.
- ♥ It may take your body a while to find a balance between activity and rest, so don't give up.



## Activities most people with heart failure can do

- ✓ Walking
- ✓ Light housework
- ✓ Gardening
- ✓ Light vacuuming
- ✓ Stretching
- ✓ Laundry
- ✓ Grocery shopping



## When to stop an activity

Stop the activity if you:

- Cannot carry on a conversation, sing, or whistle without being short of breath.
- Feel weak, tired, or dizzy.
- Feel sick to your stomach (nauseated).
- Feel your heart is pounding or racing.
- Feel your heart beating irregularly and this is new for you.
- Have pain in your chest, neck, jaw, arm, or shoulder.

Stop and rest. Sit in a comfortable chair. Do not go to bed for a nap.

## Activity most people with heart failure should not do

- ✗ Activities that involve working above your head such as painting or washing walls, washing windows, vacuuming curtains.
- ✗ Lifting or pushing heavy objects.
- ✗ Straining or holding your breath to do an activity.
- ✗ Sit ups or push ups.
- ✗ Climbing a lot of stairs.
- ✗ Heavy housework or yard work.
- ✗ Going into sauna or hot tub.

## Learn more about how important activity is

Review the 'Actionset' called '[Heart Failure: Activity and Exercise](#)' on the HealthLink BC web site.

[www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/actionset/aa87369.html](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/actionset/aa87369.html)

Check the [BC Heart Failure Network](#) web site.

## Tips about activity

- ✓ Stick with it, so it becomes a habit.
- ✓ Include a variety of different activities so you do not get bored doing the same thing all the time.
- ✓ Wear loose, comfortable clothing and supportive shoes.
- ✓ Count the fluids you drink during the activity as part of your daily fluid amount.



## What if you don't feel confident doing activities and exercises on your own?

There are many community-based programs designed specifically for people with heart disease.

To find a program in your community:

- Talk to your health care provider
- Call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1
- Go to the HealthLink BC website ([www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)).
  - Click on the 'Find' button.
  - Type in 'cardiac rehabilitation' in the 'What?' box.
  - Type in your location in the 'Where?' box.
  - Click the 'Go' button.
  - Choose a program.
- Contact the Physical Activity Line (PAL)
  - 1-877-725-1149
  - [www.physicalactivityline.com](http://www.physicalactivityline.com)
  - [info@physicalactivityline.com](mailto:info@physicalactivityline.com)