

Exercising at Home

*A guide for people
with heart conditions*



ACPICR

Association of Chartered Physiotherapists
In Cardiovascular Rehabilitation

There are many excellent ways to exercise in your own home.

What are the specific benefits?

Exercising at home can be more comfortable and convenient.

If you struggle with transport, access, or costs then exercising at home can be a great option.

Exercising at home can allow you to fit exercise into your day at a time and in a way that suits you.

You can perform very effective exercise with little or no equipment.

Increasingly there are plenty of Apps and fitness videos that can be followed providing a range of options of experience levels, durations and forms of exercise (strength, cardiovascular, balance, flexibility).

When could I start?

Your cardiovascular rehabilitation (CR) team will be able to provide you with some guidance on which might be the most appropriate for you to start with and progress through.

When you can start exercising at home will depend on the type of exercise, your current level of physical fitness as well as your cardiovascular condition and general health.



How can I get started?

Think about what times of the day you could exercise and what activities you might enjoy. Pick activities that can be adjusted to suit your pace and abilities.

We recommend that you are assessed by a CR team who can support you with individualised advice and guidance in starting your home programme.

They may also be able to help provide options and recommend particular websites or Apps they feel will be most helpful for you.

Try to gradually increase the amount of time you exercise for as you become more comfortable with it.



What about warm up and cool down?

It is important that you complete a gentle warm up before exercise and a cool down afterwards.

If using pre-recorded exercise videos or Apps, try to choose those which include a warm up and a cool down. Aim for roughly 15 minutes of progressive and 'light' feeling activity prior to your main exercise session. If the warm up provided isn't sufficient then consider adding your own warm up such as a walk.

At the end of your workout gradually reduce the exercise intensity over at least 10 minutes until you feel recovered. Stretching exercises can be incorporated before or after activity to help warm up or cool down.

Stop exercising if you experience any chest pain, palpitations, dizziness or light-headedness. If the symptoms do not go away promptly with rest and/or GTN spray/tablets seek medical advice as soon as possible.

How should I feel during my session?

For most people exercising comfortably, at a moderate level is recommended. However, for some people more vigorous activity can also be tolerated, so it is advisable to discuss with your CR team as to what is most appropriate for you.

At a moderate level of exercise, you should feel your breathing and heart rate have increased, but still be able to talk and feel able to continue.

Remember to start low and go slow, build up gradually and pace yourself.

If you are planning to use an exercise video it may be useful to watch a session first to help you understand how it is structured and what exercises are included.

If you are using a resource or equipment you have not used for a while, you may need to start at an easier level to begin with and progress gradually as your fitness improves again.

If you feel exhausted you may have worked too hard or too long for your current fitness level.

If you are planning to use a 'High Intensity' exercise programme, it is advisable to discuss this with your CR team first to ensure this is effective for you.



Other things to consider

Always use internet resources and Apps from a reputable source, such as the NHS, British Heart Foundation or those recommended by your CR team.

- Choose a resource that will combine some aerobic exercise and some strengthening exercise.
- Choose an area in the house to exercise that is a comfortable temperature, well ventilated, with enough space and is free from obstacles.
- Make sure you have taken your medications, as prescribed, prior to exercise.
- Don't exercise immediately after eating a large meal
- Remember to stay hydrated and sip water as you exercise
- Do not exercise if you feel unwell

Stop exercising if you experience any chest discomfort, palpitations, dizziness or light-headedness.

If the symptoms do not go away promptly with rest and/ or your GTN spray/tablets, seek medical advice as soon as possible.

This guidance is based on available evidence and expert opinion.

Produced by the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Cardiovascular Rehabilitation

This leaflet is not intended to replace the advice that your doctor or cardiovascular rehabilitation team give you based on their expert knowledge of your condition.

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