

## PATIENT HANDOUT 2. Stable Coronary Artery Disease (CAD): Exercise/Activity Recommendations

Heart and Stroke Canada recommends that adults exercise at least 150 minutes per week at a moderate-to-vigorous-intensity level. It is important to remember that this exercise does not have to be non-stop. You can do 10 minutes or more at a time throughout the day to reach your daily total of 30 minutes. For example, taking a brisk 10-minute walk during lunch hour (enough to make you breathe harder), playing for 10 minutes with your kids after work, and then spending another 15 minutes walking the dog in the evening would total 45 minutes for the day.

In addition to following these physical activity recommendations, individuals with coronary artery disease (CAD) should pay attention to the recommendations below to make sure the activity is safe for you and to reduce the chances of experiencing heart complications while exercising:

- It is important to speak with your primary care provider to get approval before exercising on your own.
- Always do a proper warm-up to begin with and cool-down activity afterwards. An example is walking slowly (e.g., 3–4 km per hour) five to seven minutes before and after you exercise.
- It is important not to exercise to the point of chest pain or angina. If chest pain occurs during exercise, call 911 immediately.
- Exercise with a friend and/or carry a cell phone to make sure you can get emergency help right away, if you need it.
- If prescribed, always carry your nitroglycerin, especially when exercising.
- Exercise should be stopped immediately if dizziness, nausea, unusual shortness of breath or irregular heart beats occur during or immediately after exercise. Your primary care provider should be contacted immediately, even though you may simply need to slow down a bit.
- Do not exercise outdoors when it is too cold, hot, or humid, as this weather may increase your chances of having a bad reaction.

Individuals who exercise at the recommended frequency, intensity, duration and type of activity will likely experience minimal heart-related risks and yet gain large positive benefits. These benefits include a big reduction in future heart attacks and death associated with CAD.

**Endurance (aerobic)** activities are continuous activities such as walking, cycling and tennis. They're especially beneficial for your heart, lungs and circulatory system. These should be done on most, if not all, days of the week. It is important to do a variety of activities that include light, moderate and vigorous effort. It is also important to remember that you can start out slowly with short bouts of exercise (see above) and work up to doing your activity all at once. One way to tell if you are working at a moderate or vigorous intensity is the Talk Test. If you can keep talking while you are walking, but are breathing more heavily, you are likely exercising at a moderate intensity; if cannot talk, you may be exercising vigorously. Here are some suggestions.

Light Effort	Moderate Effort	Vigorous Effort
light walking volleyball easy gardening or foraging stretching	brisk walking biking raking leaves swimming dancing water aerobics	aerobics basketball fast swimming fast dancing hockey jogging

**Strength/weight training** activities, such as carrying groceries (or toddlers), heavy yard work or weight training, strengthen muscles and bones and improve posture. Aim for at least **two times a week**. You are never too old to strengthen your body! Studies have found that strength/weight training can reverse muscle weakness even among people in their 90s.

**Flexibility/Stretching** activities, such as stretches, yoga, housework or golfing keep your muscles relaxed and your joints mobile. Increased flexibility later in life will allow you to continue to tie your shoes, reach the top shelf in your kitchen and clip your toenails.

**Balance** activities you can do at home include standing on one foot or standing on your toes while holding onto the back of a chair. As you progress, steady yourself with one finger, then try it with no hands. When you are really steady, try the exercise with your eyes closed. Yoga and Tai Chi are also good for your balance along with any exercises that will strengthen your lower body.

### Resources:

ParticipACTION: <https://www.participaction.com/splash>

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pa-ap/index-eng.php>

Manage Your Health <https://ehealth.heartandstroke.ca/> (Canadian Heart and Stroke e-website)

Make Your Day Harder [www.makeyourdayharder.com](http://www.makeyourdayharder.com) (Dr. Mike Evans)

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