

Cardiac Rehabilitation Guidelines for Walking

Daily walking is a simple and safe way to return to normal activity, and should be regarded as part of your treatment and rehabilitation. After you have been at home for _____ week(s) you may start going out for a walk every day.

By undertaking this walking programme, you should not only speed up your recovery, but you will ensure you've achieved a suitable level of fitness to be able to take part in the cardiac rehab classes which will increase your fitness levels even further. This will not only improve your quality of life and make you feel better but reduce the risk of you having any further cardiac issues in the future.

Before going walking please:

- Wear clothing that's suitable for the weather (dress up warmly in cold weather and wear a scarf over your mouth and nose to warm the air as you breathe in).
- Walk in the daylight and try to avoid walking very early in the morning or late in the evening even if it's still light outside.
- Wear a watch so you're always aware how long you've been walking for.
- Do some warm up exercises before going out in cold weather; for example, have a stroll around the house for a few minutes.
- Make sure you have your GTN spray with you (and your fast acting bronchodilator if you have asthma).

Do not attempt to walk:-

- **If you have chest pain**
- If you are feeling unwell
- When you are tired
- When the weather is freezing cold, very windy, or if it's very warm outside
- Within one hour of eating a meal
- Within one hour of taking a hot bath or shower

Guidelines for a Daily Walking Programme

- Start with a short walk – about 5 minutes on your first day at a slow/moderate pace on flat ground and see how you feel. If it makes you feel tired during or after, stick to 5 minutes a day until you feel you are ready to go further.
- If you feel quite comfortable during the walk and not excessively tired afterwards, the next time increase your walking time by 5 minutes and see how you feel
- If everything still feels OK, and you are happy, you can start to increase the time of your walk by 5 minutes every day. You can use this method to build up to walking for a minimum of 30 minutes a day, if you feel able.

Information for Patients

- Once you have built up to at least 30 minutes per day and you start to feel fitter, try to increase your walking pace slightly or try walking on some gentle inclines. By increasing the pace you should be able to cover the same distance in a shorter time. You can keep on increasing your pace as your fitness and confidence increases, however you should never increase your pace to the point that you're unable to walk and talk at the same time.
- Once you have started increasing your pace, you should always start your walk at a gentler pace for 5-10 minutes to warm-up and finish the same way for a cool down.

After you've finished your walk please:

- Make sure you're recovered before you sit down. You can do this by slowing down to a very gentle stroll during the last section of your walk and/or lightly tap your feet from side to side for a few minutes when you've got back to your house.
- Have a proper rest even if you feel reasonably fresh afterwards.
- It may help to fill in a walking diary to keep a record of your walking progress

You should stop walking if you experience the following symptoms:-

- Angina
- Excessive breathlessness
- Excessive sweating
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Nausea or vomiting
- Tiredness lasting more than 12 hours after exercise
- Palpitations (skipped heartbeats)
- Pain, swelling or stiffness in joints/muscles

If you do experience any of these symptoms, wait for a few days and try walking again for a shorter distance and proceed more gradually. If symptoms persist, you should talk to your doctor and inform a member of the cardiac rehab team if you've been invited in to an assessment.

Additional Sources of Information:

British Heart Foundation, 1st Floor, 239A High Street, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 6SS

Tel: 0121 382 3168

Fax: 0121 386 2997

Internet: <http://bhf.org.uk>

Email: region8@bhf.org.uk

Contact us:

If you would like any further advice and would like to speak to someone, you can contact the Cardiac Rehabilitation Nurses on 0121 424 4286.

Please use the space below to write down any questions you may want to ask:

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk