

A photograph of an elderly couple walking on a path in a park-like setting. The woman in the foreground is smiling and wearing a light pink cardigan. The man behind her is also smiling and wearing a blue and white plaid shirt. The background is filled with trees and a soft, golden light, suggesting a late afternoon or early morning setting.

# Care of the Heart

A Special Newsletter for MVP Members



# Walking for a Healthy Heart

Walking is a form of aerobic exercise and is one of the easiest ways to increase your physical activity and improve your health. Physical activity increases your heart rate, strengthens your heart, and increases blood circulation through your body, bringing more oxygen and nutrients to your organs. Exercise also increases your lungs' ability to take in oxygen, lowers blood pressure, helps to reduce body fat, and improves blood sugar and cholesterol levels.

- Have a checkup before beginning an exercise program. If you have heart problems, your doctor may want to do tests to find out how much activity your heart can safely handle.
- Start out slowly at first, with a warm-up in the beginning, a faster pace in the middle, and a cooldown at the end.
- To stay motivated, walk with friends, coworkers, or pets. Set goals you can reach.
- Set a goal. Try to walk at a moderate activity level for at least 2½ hours a week. One way to do this is to walk 30 minutes a day, at least five days a week.

## How can I stay motivated with a walking program?

One of the best ways to stay motivated to walk is to include other people. Ask friends and coworkers to join you. Join a walking group or club.

- Use a phone app or buy a pedometer. Use it every day, and count your steps. The first time you use it, count how many steps you normally take in a day. Set a goal for increasing it each day or week. Try to start with an increase of 2,000 steps a day and work toward 10,000. Get others to join you and set goals as a group.
- Walk before or after work or on your lunch break. Instead of taking a snack or coffee break, take a walk break.
- If the weather is bad, use a treadmill. Or take comfortable shoes to the mall, and walk several laps.
- Walk to work, school, the grocery store, or a restaurant.
- Walk around your neighborhood, around an entire park, or to do errands.
- Schedule walks on your business calendar. Turn a walk into a brainstorming session with a coworker.
- Wear comfortable shoes and socks that cushion your feet.
- Drink plenty of water. Take a bottle with you when you walk.
- Be safe, and know your surroundings. Walk in a well-lit, safe place.
- Plan family outings around walks together.
- Take your dog on a walk.
- Set a goal to participate in an organized fitness walk.

©2017 Healthwise, Incorporated, reprinted with permission for personal use only. Content shall not be further distributed. This information does not replace the advice of a doctor. MVP Health Care and Healthwise disclaim any warranty or liability for your use of this information.



# Activity and Exercise

When you have heart failure, it's very important to exercise regularly. If you are not already active, your doctor may want you to start an exercise program.

Of course, what's safe for you depends on how bad your heart failure is. But even if you can only do a small amount of exercise, it's better than not doing any exercise at all.

- Have a checkup before you start an exercise program. Your doctor probably will do an electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG) and maybe an exercise stress test to see how much activity your heart can safely handle.
- Your doctor may recommend a cardiac rehabilitation ("rehab") program at a local hospital or clinic. Rehab will give you education and support that help you build new healthy habits, such as exercise.
- Start out slowly, exercising for only a few minutes at a comfortable rate. Then each day, slowly try to increase the length of time and the intensity of your workout.
- You should not exercise during times when your heart failure is not under control.
- Set goals that you can reach. If you expect too much, you are likely to get discouraged and stop exercising.

## How can you get started on an exercise program?

If you are in a cardiac rehab program, it will be designed just for you, based on your health and your goals. You will be supervised by doctors and other specialists. You will learn how to get started on an exercise program and how to exercise safely. You will also get support to help you succeed.

**If you are not in cardiac rehab, talk with your doctor before you start exercising. To get started:**

- **Make a list of concerns** to discuss with your doctor. An exercise planning sheet can help you do this. This sheet can include things like exercises you should not do, whether you need to change how you take your medicine, and your activity goals.
- **Make an exercise plan** with your doctor. An exercise program usually consists of stretching, activities that increase your heart rate, and strength training. Visit a library or bookstore for information on exercise programs. Join a health club, walking group, or YMCA. Many cities have senior centers that offer exercise programs that don't cost much.
- **Learn how to check** your heart rate. Your doctor can show you how to take your pulse and how fast it should be (target heart rate) when you exercise.
- **Start out slowly.** Try parking farther away from the store, or walk the mall before you shop. Over time, you will increase your ability to do more.
- **Keep a record** of what you do. Now and then, read entries from months ago to see your progress. It's okay to cut back on your exercise if you are too tired or not feeling well.

©2017 Healthwise, Incorporated, reprinted with permission for personal use only. Content shall not be further distributed. This information does not replace the advice of a doctor. MVP Health Care and Healthwise disclaim any warranty or liability for your use of this information.

MVP Health Care offers a health management program for members living with heart disease. For more information or to see if you qualify, call **1-866-942-7966**. MVP's program is based on the American Heart Association (AHA) and the American College of Cardiology's Guidelines for Preventing a Heart Attack and Death in Patients with Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease. This program must be coordinated with your physician.

Information in this newsletter does not constitute medical advice. If you have questions about your health, talk to your doctor.

Health benefit plans are issued or administered by MVP Health Plan, Inc.; MVP Health Insurance Company; MVP Select Care, Inc.; and MVP Health Services Corp., operating subsidiaries of MVP Health Care, Inc. Not all plans available in all states and counties.



## Contact Us

For more information,

call **1-866-942-7966**

Monday–Friday, 8:30 am–5:00 pm

TTY: **1-800-662-1220**

## We value your opinion.

Please fill out a brief, anonymous survey at **mvplistsens.com**. We will use this information to create a better experience for all of our members. All responses are 100 percent confidential. The survey only takes a few minutes to complete.

# Reduce Your Risk of the Flu and Pneumonia

**It is important to get vaccinated against the flu and pneumonia.** Many pneumonia-related deaths are preventable through vaccination and appropriate treatment. Pneumonia is a lung infection that can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages. Signs of it include: coughing, fever, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, rapid breathing or shortness of breath, chills, or chest pain.

## **Certain people are more likely to become ill with pneumonia:**

- Adults 65 years of age or older
- Children younger than five years of age
- People under the age of 65 who have underlying medical conditions (like diabetes or HIV/AIDS)
- People ages 19–64 who smoke cigarettes or have asthma

## **There are several strategies for preventing pneumonia and other respiratory infections such as colds and the flu:**

- Wash your hands regularly.
- Clean hard surfaces that are touched often (like doorknobs and countertops).
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, your elbow, or sleeve.
- Limit your exposure to cigarette smoke.
- Take steps to treat, control, and prevent conditions like diabetes and HIV/AIDS.

**Get vaccinated.** In the United States, several vaccines prevent infections that can cause pneumonia, including Pneumococcal, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib), Pertussis (whooping cough) and seasonal influenza (flu) vaccines. Talk to your health care provider for more information on these vaccines.

