

Care of the Heart

A Special Newsletter for
MVP Health Care[®] Members

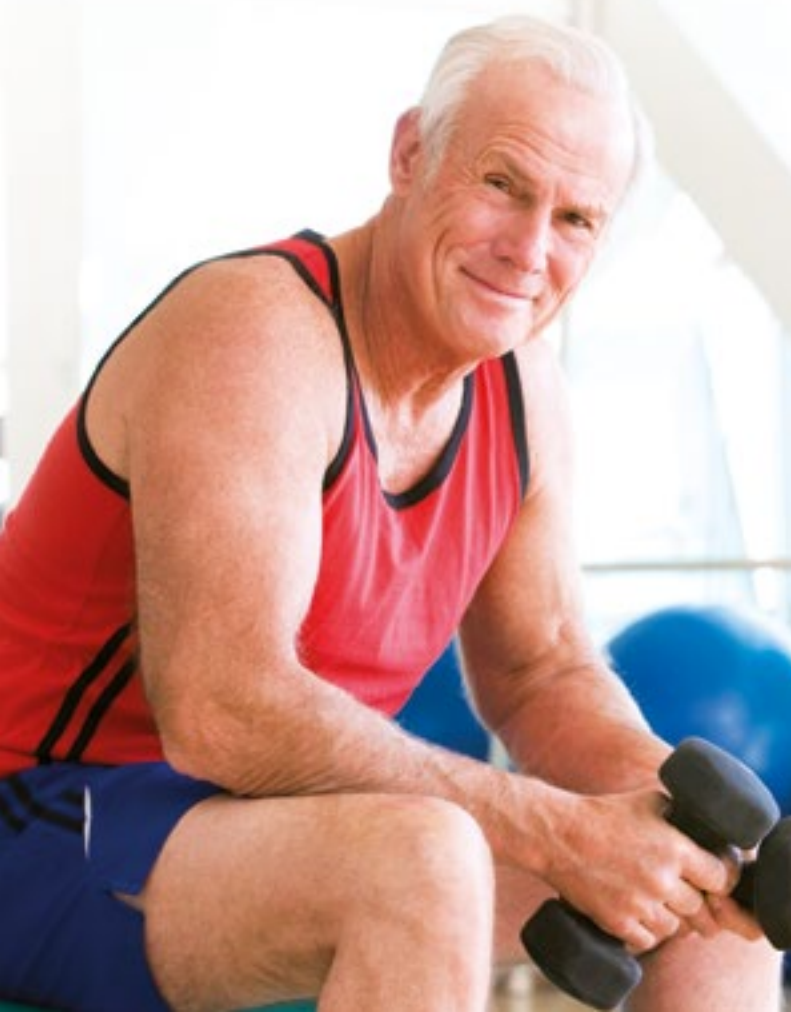


Activity and Exercise

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:

- Have a physical exam before you start any exercise program. Your doctor may do an electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG) and maybe an exercise stress test.
- 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.

Tips for exercise success

- Set realistic goals. If you expect too much, you are likely to get discouraged and stop exercising.
- Choose a type of exercise that you enjoy.
- Give yourself time. It can take months to get into the habit of exercising. After a few months, you may find that you are looking forward to it.
- Stay with it. It can be hard to stay with an exercise plan. Try exercising with a friend. It is much easier to continue an exercise program if you are doing it with someone else.
- Reward yourself. Build in rewards along the way that help you stay with your program.

When starting an exercise program

- Pace yourself by switching exercises. Rotate light workouts, such as short walks, with more intense exercises, such as low-impact aerobics or swimming.
- Avoid exercising outdoors in extreme weather or high humidity. When the weather is bad, try exercising indoors at a gym or walking at a mall.
- If you get palpitations, chest pain or pressure, trouble breathing, or dizziness or lightheadedness, stop exercising and try to rest. Call 911 if your chest pain does not go away. Call your doctor if your other symptoms don't go away.
- Don't take naps or lie down after exercise, because that reduces your ability to exercise. Instead, sit down to rest.
- Take your pulse often or wear a heart rate monitor, and keep your pulse within the range your doctor sets. Watch your pulse when walking up hills or stairs.
- Be aware of how you feel during exercise. You should be able to talk easily without being out of breath.

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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.

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Quick Tips for Being Prepared to Talk to Your Doctor

Patients who have good relationships with their doctors are more satisfied with their care and have better results. Here are some tips to help you and your doctor become better partners in improving your health care:

- Write down your questions before your visit. List the most important ones first to make sure they get asked and answered.
- Bring a "health history" list with you, and keep it up to date.
- Always bring any medications you are taking, including over-the-counter, or a list of those medications (include when and how often you take them) and what strength.
- You might want to bring someone along to help you ask questions and remember the answers.
- Find more information and printable forms at **mvphhealthcare.com**.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)



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% 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.

