

AFTER 8 weeks or so, with your doctor's permission, you are encouraged to enter a supervised cardiac exercise program to improve your physical and cardiac fitness. Your physiotherapist or doctor can give you information for a program in your area.

Stairs:

- You will practice stairs with your physiotherapist before going home. You may climb stairs at home as needed but do not go up and down stairs just for exercise.

Other Exercise Options

(Check first with your Doctor)

- Join an organized walking program for senior citizens held in some shopping malls.
- Join an exercise group at the local recreation/senior centre.
- Your doctor can give you information for a program in your area.

Home Walking Exercise Guidelines

For Open Heart Surgery Patients

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or email pchem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **FD.370.H752**

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For Period 6 - 8 weeks following Surgery

Why?

- For the first 6 to 8 weeks after your surgery, your body is in the process of healing.
- During this time, mild to moderate exercise is very beneficial in maintaining your general strength and condition, and preventing the complications of inactivity.
- Walking is an excellent low intensity exercise.
- High intensity exercise is not appropriate at this time.

How?

- Walk outside on flat ground. Avoid hills.
- Do not walk for one hour after meals.
- Try to walk everyday, but at least three times a week.
- Hot weather - walk in the cool of the morning or evening.
- Cold weather - walk at warmest time of the day.
- Avoid exercise in temperature extremes. Shopping malls provide a good place to walk.

General Guidelines

- Walk at a moderate pace. Don't walk too slowly although you should never feel pushed or breathless at your walking speed.
- Warm-up: walk the **FIRST** block slowly to warm up muscles and allow the heart to accommodate.
- Cool-down: walk the **LAST** block slowly to allow the heart rate and breathing to return to resting rates. Warm-up and cool-down reduce muscle stiffness the next day and improve your ability to exercise.

- Increase the distance when it feels comfortable to do so, but it is not necessary to increase the distance everyday.
- If you are feeling particularly tired one day, then do not walk as far the following day.
- If you become short of breath, overtired or have any unusual symptoms, then **STOP** and rest.
- If you have any symptoms that concern you, contact your doctor.
- Do not use the treadmill, bike, or stair climber for exercise at this time.

The following are guidelines on progressing your walking exercise:

First Walking Day:

- Start by continuing with the same level of activity as in hospital for the first few days at home until you feel confident.
- Start by walking an easy distance, perhaps $\frac{1}{2}$ block.

On the Following Days:

- **IF** the previous day's distance was quite easy and not too tiring, **THEN** increase the distance by $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ block.
- Continue to gradually increase the distance every few days as you feel able.
- **IF** the previous day's distance was too tiring, **DECREASE** the distance and work up more slowly.
- Try to walk almost everyday. Try not to miss more than one day in a row.