



Make it rewarding

Regular endurance activity has helped Tom stay healthy after major heart surgery:

'At age 45 I had quadruple bypass surgery. I was shocked because I was so young. Those months after my surgery are a blur to me now. After several months of cardiac rehab, I knew my heart health was in my hands. So now I run regularly around my neighbourhood. I have a number of different routes and if it's raining, I use my treadmill. I admit I was nervous at first to push myself. I worried I might do more harm than good. But it's been 12 years and I feel great! This year, I will celebrate my daughter's graduation from university, continue as assistant coach for the local football team and maybe even teach my wife to play golf. I believe physical activity has made all of that possible for me.'





How to improve your endurance

Endurance exercises — walking, jogging, swimming, mowing, sweeping, dancing, playing tennis — increase your heart rate and breathing for an extended period of time. They will make it easier for you to walk further, faster or uphill. They also should make everyday activities, such as gardening, shopping, walking up stairs, playing with children or playing a sport easier.

How much, how often?

Refer to your starting goals and build up your endurance gradually. If you haven't been active for a long time, it's especially important to work your way up over time. It may take a while to go from a longstanding inactive lifestyle to doing some of the activities in this section. For example, start out with five or 10 minutes at a time, and then build up to at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity endurance activity daily. Doing less than 10 minutes at a time won't give you the desired heart and lung benefits.

Try to build up to at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days. Every day is best. Remember that this is a minimum recommendation; some people will be able to do more.



For more information

check out the 10,000 Steps website at www.10000steps.org.au



Counting your steps

Pedometers, or step counters, can help you keep track of your endurance activity, set goals and measure progress. Aim for at least 10,000 steps per day.

Most inactive people get fewer than 5,000 steps a day, and some very inactive people get only 2,000 steps a day. Wear a step counter for a few days to see how you're doing. You can use the endurance daily record in your workbook to record your steps. If you get:



- fewer than 5,000 steps a day — gradually try to add 3,000 to 4,000 more steps a day
- about 8,000 steps a day — you're getting close to meeting the recommended activity target; try gradually adding 2,000 more steps a day
- 10,000 or more steps a day — you can be confident that you're getting an adequate amount of endurance activity
- 10,000 steps a day comfortably — try for 15,000 steps a day, which would put you in the high-activity group.

About endurance activities

Listen to your body when doing endurance activities. Is the activity making you feel unwell or too tired? Endurance activities should not cause dizziness, chest pain or pressure, or a feeling like heartburn.

Do a little light activity, such as easy walking, before and after your endurance activities to warm up and cool down.

When you're outdoors, watch out for low-hanging branches and uneven surfaces. Walk during the day or in well-lit areas at night and be aware of your surroundings.

When it's not possible to be outdoors, you may want to try indoor activities:

- If you have stairs at home, safely go up and down the steps a few times in a row.
- Walk at a shopping centre or on a treadmill.
- Go for a swim at your local pool.



Go here for more information

For more about drinking enough fluids, see page 84.

Water

As you get older, you may not feel thirsty even though your body needs fluids. Be sure to drink liquids when doing any activity that makes you sweat. By the time you notice you are thirsty, you probably are already low on fluid. This guideline is important year round, but it's especially important in hot weather. If your doctor has told you to limit your fluids, be sure to check before increasing the amount of fluid you drink while exercising. For example, people with congestive heart failure or kidney disease may need to limit fluids.

Temperature

Older adults can be affected by heat and cold more than others. In extreme cases, too much heat can cause heatstroke, and very cold temperatures can lead to a dangerous drop in body temperature. Dress in layers so you can add or remove clothes as needed. Remember to be sunsafe when outside.



Quick tip

Some people are afraid to be physically active after a heart attack or being diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. But physical activity can help reduce your chances of having a heart attack.

If you've had a heart attack, talk with your doctor to be sure you're following a safe, effective physical activity program. Ask about cardiac rehabilitation programs, which include exercise, education and counselling to help you return to an active life.

Making it real !

Walking one kilometre a day at the shopping centre will help you keep up with your grandchildren during a trip to the park.

Some people however, may not be able to be active for 30 minutes at a time. It's important to set realistic goals based on your own health and abilities.



Equipment

Whatever activity you choose, stay safe. To prevent injuries, be sure to use safety equipment. For example, wear a helmet when cycling. Ask someone to go with you. Wear the proper shoes (see page 19).

Progressing

When you're ready to do more, first build up the amount of time you spend doing endurance activities, then build up the difficulty of your activities. For example, gradually increase your time to 30 minutes over several days to weeks (or even months, depending on your condition) by walking longer distances. Then walk more briskly or up steeper hills. See page 12 for more examples of physical activities that build endurance. To record your activities, use the endurance daily record in your workbook.



Ways to gauge your effort

The amount of effort you need to do an activity will depend on your starting point, including your fitness level, how strong you are and how active you've been. For example, walking a kilometre in 15 minutes will be a lot easier for someone who does it every day compared with someone who has never done it.

You can use these informal guidelines to estimate how much effort you are putting into your endurance activities.

- A moderate level of physical activity will cause your heart to beat faster with some shortness of breath, but you should be able to talk comfortably while being active. A good example of moderate-intensity activity is brisk walking, mowing the lawn, digging in the garden, or medium-paced swimming or cycling. Remember, older people should accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.
- A vigorous level of physical activity will cause your heart to beat a lot faster with shortness of breath that makes talking difficult. A good example of vigorous-intensity activity is jogging, brisk rowing or playing sports such as football, squash or netball.