

# Congestive Heart Failure and Exercise



## MODERATE EXERCISE CAN HELP YOUR HEART!

If you are at-risk for heart failure, you may think that exercise will hurt you. But, along with prescribed medication, regular exercise can help reduce how often you have difficulty breathing or feel weak. Most people have more energy and less stress after exercising. It can also lower your weight, blood pressure and cholesterol levels and can improve your circulation. Before you start to exercise, ask your doctor to help you develop the right exercise program for you. The best exercises to help prevent heart failure are:

- Aerobic activities
- Walking
- Biking
- Swimming

Your doctor may want you to have a stress test. This test measures the strength of your heart when you are walking on a treadmill or riding an

exercise bike. The stress test will help you judge how much activity is safe for your heart.

### AVOID EXERCISING:

- right after eating
- right after taking medication
- in hot or humid weather
- in cold weather
- if you don't feel well
- if you feel short of breath
- if you have chest pain
- if you get nauseated, dizzy or lightheaded.

### HERE'S A SIMPLE, AT-HOME EXERCISE PROGRAM:

- Wear comfortable clothing and flat shoes or sneakers.
- Warm up first. Spend 5-10 minutes stretching and walking at a slow pace.
- Start off slow. Walk or ride a stationary bike at a comfortable pace. If you get tired after 2 minutes, stop and rest.

- After resting for 1-2 minutes, try to walk or ride again for another 2 minutes. Repeat this five times, for a total of 10 minutes. Or, if you prefer, you can exercise a couple of times a day.
- To increase the amount of time you exercise, add a minute or two every week.
- Eventually you will reach your goal of exercising 5-7 days a week for 30-40 minutes a day (if your doctor says it's safe).
- Remember to always cool down when you're done exercising. Just repeat what you did to warm up.

**STOP** exercising immediately if you get chest pain or discomfort, shortness of breath, lightheadedness, dizziness or nausea.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about cardiac health, call Care Management 1.800.414.6641 (TTY: 1.800.473.0989).



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

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