

# Get active for your heart

## After a heart event, it's normal to be unsure about how much physical activity you should be doing

If you were recently in hospital, you may have been given some instructions about returning to physical activity. You can speak with your doctor, cardiac rehabilitation team, or other healthcare professional for advice on beginning activities again and pacing yourself.

Within a few weeks of a heart event or diagnosis, many people find they are ready to start returning to everyday activities.

It's important to follow your doctor's advice and slowly build up your activity. Take notice of how you feel when you are doing any type of physical activity. This will help you find a comfortable and safe level of activity that works for you as you recover.

A good way to start is by doing light, everyday activities, such as walking. You can build up by gradually adding other easy activities as you feel able.

While it's great to be more active, in the first couple of weeks you should avoid doing heavier housework, such as mowing the lawn, vacuuming, mopping, weeding or raking until your doctor says that it's safe for you to do these.

### The benefits of physical activity on your heart

Staying active is great for your heart health and your recovery. Being regularly active can have immediate and long-lasting benefits including:

- increasing your energy levels
- helping to manage your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood glucose and weight
- strengthening your bones, muscles and joints, which can improve your strength and overall fitness
- improving blood circulation
- having a positive self-image and mindset.



Scan the QR code or visit [myheartmylife.org.au](https://myheartmylife.org.au) to join MyHeart MyLife - a free support program for people living with heart disease.

## What about walking?

Walking is a great way to start, as you can go at your own pace and build up gradually. After a heart event or diagnosis, you can start by walking 5–10 minutes a day and build up slowly to 30 minutes over several weeks.

Follow our walking top tips below.

- **Start small.** Begin with walking around your house or your block. Make sure that the ground is flat and remember to walk at a comfortable pace. As you start to feel better and your energy levels start to improve, slowly increase how fast you walk.
- **Know your body.** If you don't feel well enough to walk one day, let your body rest. It's okay to miss walking that day. Stop if any activity causes you pain, or you get very tired, dizzy or short of breath. Read up on the warning signs of a heart attack action plan to know what to do if this happens.
- **Warm up and cool down.** It is important to warm up before and cool down after your walk. To warm up, start at a slower and easier pace for the first few minutes of your walk, and cool down for five minutes at a slower pace at the end of the walk. This helps to gradually increase your heart rate and helps prevent muscle injuries.
- **Set the right pace.** To know if you are walking at the right pace, your breathing should be a bit heavier, but you should still be able to talk while walking. Below is a guide you might want to try as you build up your walking pace.

STAGE	TIME (MINS)	TIMES PER DAY	PACE
1	5-10	1-2	Gentle
2	15	1	Gentle
3	20	1	Moderate
4	25	1	Moderate
5	25-30	1	Moderate
6	30+	1	Moderate



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