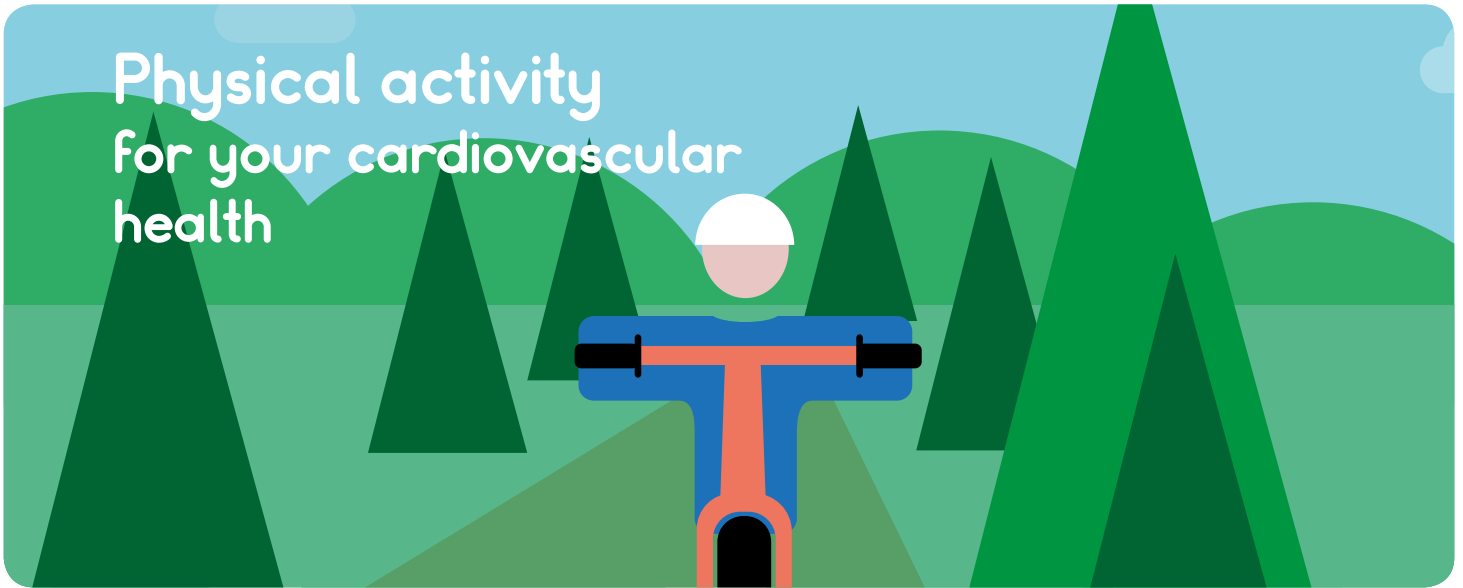




## Physical activity for your cardiovascular health



This resource talks about how physical activity may affect your cardiovascular health. It should be used along with additional information given to you from your family doctor.

**Regular physical activity can help you manage cardiovascular conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, or stroke. Studies show that people with a cardiovascular condition who are more physically active have:**



Better long-term survival rates

Fewer heart attacks and strokes and lower admission rates to hospital

Better quality of life and sleep quality

Lower stress, depression, and anxiety

Better control of blood pressure and cholesterol

Your physical activity can be **enjoyable**, **effective**, and **safe**.



## Enjoyable



Some people with cardiovascular conditions find it hard to get started with physical activity because they are worried about how it will make them feel. It is best to start small and build up slowly. Being active with others can be a great way to make physical activity more enjoyable.

Trying different activities lets you find what works best for you. If you're not sure how to begin, consider attending an exercise class or drop-in activity in your community. Look for your local Cardiac Rehab program which offers access to a supervised exercise program in a comfortable setting; just ask your doctor to make a referral.

## Effective



Regular physical activity reduces your risk of heart disease and stroke; getting 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week can reduce your risk by 50%!



## Safe



The kind of physical activity you can do safely may be affected by your health conditions, your fitness level, and by your current treatments.

Getting started usually means moving 'little but often' with some light walking or similar types of activity. Gradually increase to a level that makes you feel like you are breathing heavier than normal, so that you can talk but not sing. If you feel especially tired, you can try less intense physical activity for a shorter time, or take a day off and try again the next day.

If you have high blood pressure, it can be helpful to monitor your levels. If your blood pressure is very high (systolic blood pressure over 180 mmHg and/or diastolic blood pressure over 100 mmHg), talk to your health care team. If you have peripheral arterial disease, try to walk even when it is a little bit painful (within reason), as this will increase the amount you can walk over time.



## Avoid physical activity and consult your doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Unusual fatigue or weakness
- Chest pain or an irregular pulse
- Difficulty breathing
- Feeling sick during activity
- Acute pain or injury
- Unexplained dizzy spells

## Helpful resources



The Heart and Stroke Foundation gives great tips for staying active.

<http://www.heartandstroke.ca/get-healthy/stay-active>

Doctors in the UK have put together a website with informative videos and online pamphlets, including specific advice about physical activity for different cardiovascular conditions.

<http://www.benefitfromactivity.org.uk/why-am-i-doing-this/conditions/cardio-respiratory-health>

Funding for this project has been provided by the Foundation for Advancing Family Medicine's (FAFM) Patient Education Grants for Family Medicine Residents.

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