



Cardiac rehabilitation home exercise programme

Booklet one



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Introduction

This booklet is an easy-to-follow guide on your recommended exercise programme. Use it to continue exercising safely and effectively. If there are any exercises the physiotherapist thinks you should not attempt, you will be told before receiving the booklet.

Please discuss the exercise intensity and duration with your physiotherapist.

Over time, you should aim for 20 to 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity five times a week. However, for some, a less intense programme may be more suitable (for example building up to 10 to 15 minutes over time).

In the early stages, you should exercise at a low intensity and gradually progress as able.

The exercise diary on page five is a way for you to chart your exercise routine.

You can exercise just as well at home as in an expensive gym. Just follow your programme and make it a regular part of your weekly routine.

At all times when exercising, you should feel comfortable and be able to speak in full sentences.

Things to remember:

- wait two hours after a big meal before exercising
- remember to follow the warm up and cool down exercises – they are important
- the Borg scale (page 6) will help you monitor your exercise intensity, so use it and don't overdo it
- if you usually carry a GTN spray, keep it with you when exercising. If you experience symptoms of angina, stop exercising and follow the instructions for the use of the GTN spray as you have been advised
- do not have a very hot or cold shower before or after exercise
- wear comfortable, loose clothing
- if you stop exercising because you are unwell – for example if you have a cold or flu – then when you do feel better and start exercising again, do so at a much reduced level and gradually build up over time
- when you first start exercising, it can be a good idea to have someone nearby until you gain your confidence
- drink water to rehydrate the body. If you are on a fluid restriction, please discuss this with the HEART team
- prepare the environment before your exercise by rolling up any rugs or mats. Have a sturdy chair close by for support. Make sure the room is well ventilated and have a glass of water nearby.

Do not exercise if:

- you are experiencing chest pain
- you feel short of breath
- your heartbeat feels irregular and this is not normal for you
- you have a temperature or feel generally unwell
- you are light-headed, dizzy or lethargic.

Your exercise diary

Day/ date	Pre HR	Comments	Post HR	Borg

HR = heart rate

Borg RPE (Rate of Perceived Exertion) scale

6	No exertion at all
7	
8	Extremely light
9	Very light
10	
11	Light
12	
13	Somewhat hard
14	
15	Hard (heavy)
16	
17	Very hard
18	
19	Extremely hard
20	Maximal exertion

Indicators to stop exercising:

- inability to speak in full sentences
- chest pain or tightness
- excessive fatigue
- light-headedness
- confusion
- nausea
- paleness
- excessive sweating
- any new pain.

Remember:

This exercise program should only be performed after discussion with your physiotherapist.

How to take your pulse

If your physiotherapist advises you to do so, take your pulse using the following method.

Turn your right hand palm upwards, then place two fingers of your left hand near the base of your thumb on your right wrist. If you have trouble finding your pulse, it may be that you are pressing too hard or too lightly.



Count the beats for 30 seconds and multiply by two.

Training heart range = _____

Structure of session

- warm up
- stretches
- circuit
- cool down
- stretches.

It is very important that each session of exercise is preceded by a warm up and concluded with a cool down.

Warm up

Reasons for doing a warm up:

- it eases the body into exercise
- it prepares the heart and lungs for the exercise by gradually increasing the body temperature and the blood flow to the heart and working muscles
- it prevents muscle soreness and injury
- the warm up should last 15 minutes and gradually increase by mobilising the whole body.

Examples for a warm up

1. Walk slowly at first in your local area. After five minutes, speed up the pace slightly. After 10 minutes (but only if you feel able to), start to gradually increase the pace a little bit more. Remember to stay safe. Remember your Borg scale and don't overdo it.
2. Or, start by slowly walking on the spot for three minutes, and then start walking in your local area. Start off by walking at a slow, casual pace at first until the 10 minute mark. Then increase the pace for the last five minutes to a brisk walk – but only if you feel able to. Remember your Borg!

When choosing the route you will walk, ensure there are no steep hills. You should be back in the house after 15 minutes ready for the main exercises. Make the walk fun – walk with your partner, your dog etc. Remember this is just your warm up. Start gently and gradually quicken the pace. At some point during your warm up, do the stretches as outlined below.

Remember:

A warm up should raise your heart rate slightly. You should still feel very comfortable and have lots of energy. At some point in your warm up, do the stretches on pages 10 and 11 as outlined.

Stretches

Reasons for doing stretches:

- stretches help to prepare the muscles for any activity
- stretches help to reduce the risk of muscle injury or post-exercise soreness.

These stretches should be done after the warm up and again after the cool down. You should feel a gentle stretch – not pain. Do not bounce as you reach the end point of a stretch. Hold the stretch for at least 10 seconds, release, relax, and repeat on the other side. If you have any problems, ask the physiotherapist for advice. Keep moving whilst doing stretches.

Stretches

Walk on the spot in between each stretch.

1. Tricep stretch

Bend and lift one arm. Hold your elbow with the other hand and ease back until you feel a slight stretch at the back of your upper arm. Repeat on the other side.

NB. Avoid this stretch if you have a pacemaker or implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD). If you have had recent cardiac surgery, only do this exercise if it feels comfortable.



2. Obliques (side of trunk)

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your hands down by your side. Bend sideways at the waist until you feel a stretch (taking care not to lean forwards or backwards). Do not bounce. Repeat on other side.



3. Trunk rotation

Sit on a chair and clasp your arms on your chest. Turn your shoulders around to one side. Come back to the centre. Repeat on other side.

NB. Please take care if you have had a recent hip replacement.



4. Calf stretch

Stand with your feet hip-width apart and take a step forward. Hold onto a support. Bend your front leg and keep your back leg straight, while keeping your heel on the floor. You will feel a stretch in your calf. Change leg and repeat.



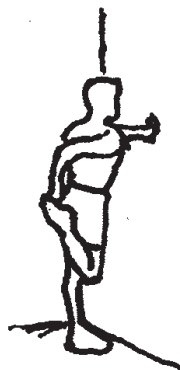
5. Hamstring stretch

Take a step forward with your right leg. Bend your left leg as if you are about to sit down, keeping your right leg straight. You will feel a stretch in the back of your right leg. Place your hands on the bent leg. Stick your bottom out and keep your chin up. Change leg and repeat.



6. Quadriceps stretch

Holding onto a wall for support, reach down and hold onto your trouser leg. Slowly pull your heel up toward your bottom and hold it there. Keep your knees together. Repeat with the other leg.



Stretches should not be painful. Never force a stretch.

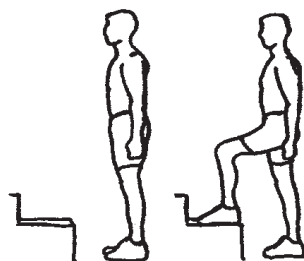
If you have any balance problems, speak to your physiotherapist, as some exercises may need to be modified.

Exercise circuit

This is the cardiovascular part of the exercise session when your heart and lungs are working harder. Do each exercise for the duration of time indicated. If you have any problems, ask your physiotherapist for advice.

1. Stand in front of a step or stair. Step up and down with one leg leading, and then repeat with the other leg leading.

Repeat for 60 seconds.



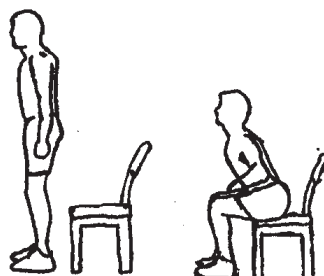
2. While walking on the spot, have the palms of both hands facing upwards. Bend alternate arms at the elbow. If you want to progress, hold a tin can in each hand. Keep your feet moving by walking on the spot.

Repeat for 60 seconds.



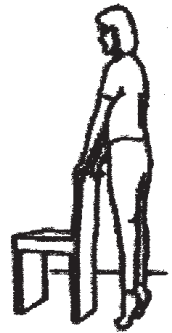
3. With your arms at your side, bend slightly forward and stand up slowly. Lower yourself back into your seat slowly. Try to keep your knees in line with your heels throughout the motion. When you are feeling more confident, you may raise your hands up to shoulder level.

Repeat for 60 seconds.



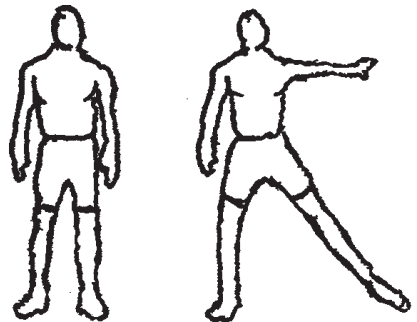
4. Push up and down on your toes. Hold onto a support if needed. When you are more confident, try lifting your arms out sideways if you are able to.

Repeat for 60 seconds.



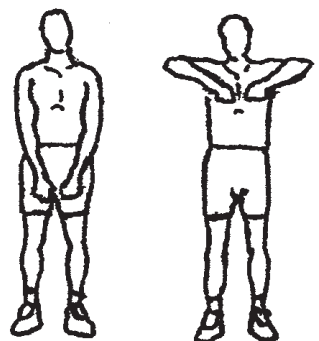
5. Stand with your legs together and your arms by your side. Take your right arm and right leg out sideways, and then return to the centre. Repeat on the left side.

Repeat for 60 seconds.

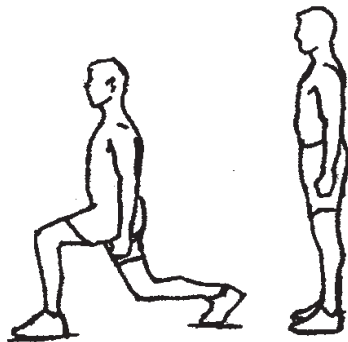


6. Place your hands in front of your body. Bend your arms at the elbows and lift your hands up to chest height. Lower and repeat. Your wrists must remain below elbow height. Keep your feet moving.

Repeat for 60 seconds.

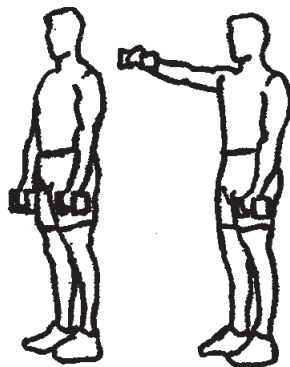


7. Stand upright with your arms by your side. Take a larger than normal step forward with your right leg. Move back to the starting position and repeat by stepping forward with other leg. Hold onto a support if necessary. Make sure your knee doesn't go beyond the front of your toes.



Repeat for 60 seconds.

8. Stand upright with tin cans in both hands. Lift one hand up in front of you and then bring it back down to your side. Do not bend at the elbow. Repeat with the other arm.



Do not lift the can higher than your shoulders.

Keep your feet moving by walking on the spot.

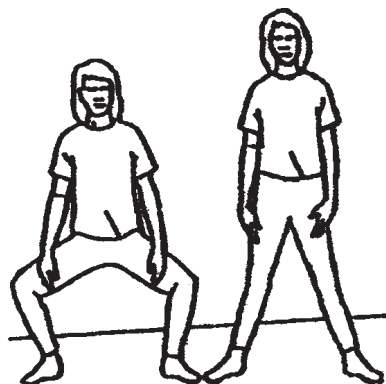
Repeat for 60 seconds.

9. Start in an upright standing position. Raise your right knee and touch it with your left hand. Return to the starting position. Repeat with your left knee and right hand.



Repeat for 60 seconds.

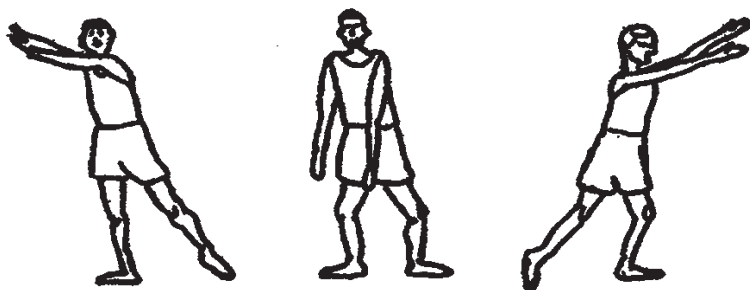
10. Stand with your feet wide apart, toes pointing outwards and knees bent (keep your knees and toes in line). Straighten your legs. Keep your back straight and bottom tucked in.



Repeat for 60 seconds.

11. Stand with your knees slightly bent and your back straight. Swing your arms from left to right. Keep your head steady to maintain your balance.

Repeat for 60 seconds.



Once you have completed the exercise circuit, think about your Borg scale. An exertion level between 11 and 14 is a good range of exercise for most people.

If you feel fine, can talk in sentences and your Borg is below 15, you may repeat the circuit one more time. Once you have completed the circuit once or twice, you must finish with the cool down exercises.

Cool down

The cool down should last about 10 minutes. It is important.

A cool down is where the exercise level is gradually reduced so that your heart rate and blood pressure return to normal. After you have completed the circuit of exercises, walk around gently to cool down for 10 minutes. Repeat the stretches on page 10 and 11. The stretches help prevent post-exercise stiffness and help to improve your flexibility.

The exercise session has now finished.

Remember

After the physiotherapist gives you this programme, please feed back to them at your next cardiac rehabilitation session. The first week you are given the programme, please practise it just once. Over time, you can build up to doing the programme three to five times a week.

Continue with your weekly activities, but incorporate this exercise circuit and make it part of your weekly routine.

On the days when you do not do the exercise circuit, make sure you still go for your normal walk.

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References

ACPICR Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Cardiac Rehabilitation, ACPICR Standards, Standards for Physical Activity and Exercise in the Cardiovascular Population, 2015, 3rd Edition.

Balady, (2003) 'ACSM's Guidelines for exercise testing and prescription', Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Bell, J. (2000) 'Programming and Prescription' in West, D (ed.) BACR Phase IV Training Manual, Berkshire.

British Heart Foundation (2003), 'Get Active!', London.

British Heart Foundation, 'Active Heart, Healthy Heart – your step by step guide'.

Physio Tools UK.

Notes

Please note that if for any reason you would value a second opinion concerning your diagnosis or treatment, you are entirely within your rights to request this.

The first step would usually be to discuss this with the doctor or other lead clinician who is responsible for your care.

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death. For support in stopping smoking contact **Smokefree Bristol** on **0117 922 2255**.

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