Chapter # 19
How Much Physical Activity Is Good For You?

Know how much regular physical activity you need to do to get health benefits

Reduce the amount of time you spend sitting

You Will Learn:

1) The value of exercise
2) The impact exercise can have on the plaque in your coronary arteries
3) How you can sit less and move more during the day
The Value of Exercise

Research tells us that the more fit you are, the longer you can live. If you improve the function of your heart, lungs and muscles you will become more fit. Research also tells us that by becoming more fit; you can reduce your risk for diseases like heart disease. To get these health benefits you need to exercise regularly.

What Are the Health Benefits of Regular Exercise?

- Increase how long you live
- Decrease your risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancers
- Improve your balance and decrease your risk of falling
- Keep good bone health
- Increase your muscular strength and endurance
- Improve your mood and how you feel
- Improve your energy
- Prevents plaque in your coronary arteries from getting bigger

The Impact Exercise Can Have on the Plaque in Your Coronary Arteries

You can make lifestyle changes to control your risk factors for coronary artery disease. Making lifestyle changes can help the plaque stabilize (stay the same) or even regress (get smaller and better). See Figure 1. Regular exercise is one lifestyle change that can help plaque stabilize or regress.

**Figure 1.** Plaque in the coronary artery can A progress (increase), B stabilize (stay the same size) or C regress (get smaller).
How Much Exercise Do You Need to Do?

Research studies have confirmed how much exercise you need to do to stabilize or regress the plaque in your coronary arteries.

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<th>To cause the plaque in your coronary arteries to stabilize do:</th>
<th>To cause the plaque in your coronary arteries to regress do:</th>
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<td>• 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise per week</td>
<td>• 300-360 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise per week</td>
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Doing muscle and bone strengthening exercises (resistance training) 2 days per week will also help to improve your health. This means keep doing the resistance training program you started.

Some people may be able to do the amount of exercise needed to stabilize or regress plaque, while others cannot. You may be living with other health problems that make it unsafe to exercise at the levels described above.

If you cannot do 150 to 360 minutes of exercise each week, you can focus on other healthy habits that can help stabilize or regress your plaque. These healthy habits include taking your medicines as prescribed by your doctor.

**Important! Talk to Your Cardiac Rehab team about:**

- **How much** exercise you can do safely
- **What types** of exercise are safe for you

**Moderate and Vigorous Exercise**

To stabilize or regress the plaque in your coronary arteries you need to do a certain amount of moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise. Keep in mind that you do not have to do the same type of exercise each day.
Moderate aerobic exercise means doing things like:

- Dancing
- Brisk walking
- Games/sports

Vigorous (more intense) aerobic exercise means doing things like:

- Running
- Walking/climbing briskly up a hill
- Fast cycling
- Fast swimming
- Competitive sports

Sitting Less and Moving More

Most adults spend about 10 hours a day sitting down. This is about 70 percent (%) of a waking day. Research shows that sitting for long periods of time is not good for your health. Your body slowly changes the longer you sit. For example:

- You burn fewer calories
- Your muscles get weaker
- You are at greater risk for diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers

Take Action:

Even if you exercise regularly, you still need to reduce the amount of time you sit. To break up your sitting time, it is helpful to think about when you sit most often during your day. You might sit when you:

- Eat breakfast and dinner
- Drive to work and back home
- Work at your desk
- Watch television, use a computer, talk on the phone, read
- Spend time with family and friends
When you find yourself sitting, think about whether you are able to replace or reduce some of the time with standing or moving. This could be by:

- Breaking up sitting time by standing up or walking around for 2 to 3 minutes every 20 minutes. Setting an alarm on your computer or phone might help remind you to get up and move
- Standing while eating your breakfast or when reading the newspaper
- Doing household chores such as folding clothes, washing dishes or ironing, while watching television
- Parking farther away from work (or the mall) and walking the rest of the way
- On public transport, if you are able stand for part of the way
- Use the stairs more and the elevator or escalator less. If you are able, use the stairs to go up one floor or down two floors
- Keep a jug of water at your desk so you have to take regular breaks to go to the washroom. Do not do this if your doctor has advised you to restrict your fluids

Aim to break up your sitting time slowly. Set small goals such as sitting less during your morning routine. Eventually, by just making a few changes to your daily routine, you will find that it is pretty easy to sit less and move around more.

Important!

If you are sitting for a long period of time, try getting up every 20 minutes and stand (or walk) for 2 minutes

Your Resources

1) Go the following website and watch this video called “23.5 hours" by Dr. Mike Evans.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUaInS6HlGo