Chapter # 3
Aerobic Exercise

Know how your aerobic exercise program works

You Will Learn:

1) What aerobic exercise is and why it is important
2) The components of your aerobic exercise program
3) Why it is important to follow your exercise program
What is Aerobic Exercise and Why is it Important?

Aerobic exercise is an activity that you sustain for a longer length of time. You can use the large muscle groups in your body to do aerobic exercise.

*E.g.:* walking, biking, jogging

Aerobic exercise starts slowly to allow your heart rate to increase slowly. Once your heart reaches a target level, you keep that pace (of walking, biking, jogging or swimming) constant for a prescribed length of time. In your Cardiac Rehab program, your aerobic exercise is tailored to you so that it is safe and right for you. You will have your own target level for your heart rate.

Doing aerobic exercise will help you achieve a healthy body. Aerobic exercise can:

- Make your heart and lungs stronger and work better (improve your cardiovascular fitness)
- Decrease your blood sugar levels (if you have diabetes)
- Reduce your risk for heart disease
- Help you live longer

The Components of your Aerobic Exercise Program

How Was My Aerobic Exercise Program Made?

Your aerobic exercise program was tailored for you by your Cardiac Rehab team. To make your aerobic exercise program, your Cardiac Rehab team looked at your:

1) Medical history
   - Your Cardiac Rehab team looks at:
     - What happened to your heart
     - Other health concerns you have (this may include problems with your muscles or joints)

2) Exercise stress test results
   - Your Cardiac Rehab team looks at:
     - Your level of fitness
     - Your heart rate and blood pressure during exercise
3) Preferred way to exercise

- Your Cardiac Rehab team looks at:
  - What kind of aerobic exercise you prefer
  - What exercise equipment you have access to

Your Tailored Exercise Prescription

The exercise prescription that you receive will help you make the most gains in your health while keeping your heart safe.

Exercise is Designed and Personalized For You

Your Cardiac Rehab team prescribes your aerobic exercise prescription like the way your doctor prescribes your medicine. Like medicine, exercise needs to be defined, unique to you and may need to be changed over time. The FITT principle is used for your exercise prescription for this reason.

FITT Principle

**F: Frequency**- How often do I exercise?

Try for 5 days per week

If you do more than 5 days, you may:

- Strain your muscles or joints
- Feel more tired or unwell
- Have more irregular heart rhythms (skipped beats)

If you do less than 5 days per week, you may not make the same gains in your health. If you want to do other types of daily exercise, talk to your Cardiac Rehab team first.

**I: Intensity**- How hard do I exercise?

Your Cardiac Rehab team will tell you how hard to work by giving you:

1) A target heart rate range
• Your target heart rate range tells you how fast your heart should beat while you exercise. Each person has their own target heart rate range
• Staying in your target heart rate range will help you exercise safely and improve your health
• Do not allow your heart rate to go higher than your target heart rate range
• Speak to your Cardiac Rehab team if you find it hard to increase your heart rate to your target range during exercise
• Beta blocker medicine lowers your heart rate. Your heart rate will likely be lower if you take your beta blocker medicine close to the time when you start to exercise
• Always use the Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale and your pulse to know if you are putting in the right amount of effort

2) A walking speed/pace that is comfortable for you
• If you are walking for your exercise, your exercise prescription will tell you how far to go and how long it should take you
• If you walk on a treadmill, your exercise prescription will tell you at what speed to set the treadmill. These details will help you walk at a pace that is safe for you

Four Ways to Check How Hard You Are Working
Since it can still be a challenge to know if you are putting in the right amount of effort, there are 4 ways to check how hard you are working while you exercise:

1) Take your pulse and record it on your exercise diary. See Chapter 2—Safe Exercise for information on how to take your pulse and how to fill out your exercise diary

2) Use the Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale. See Chapter 2—Safe Exercise for more information on how to use the RPE scale

3) Do the walk/talk test
• During your exercise, try talking to someone beside you. If you are very short of breath while you are talking, you might be working too hard
- It is okay to hear yourself breathe while you exercise

4) Watch for symptoms
- If you follow your exercise prescription, you should not have symptoms
- If you feel symptoms, slow down your exercise at once and follow the steps to manage your symptoms outlined in Chapter 2—Safe Exercise
- Speak with your Cardiac Rehab team if your exercise prescription needs to be changed

**T: Type**- What kind of exercise will I do?
Recall that aerobic exercise is sustained activity that uses the large muscle groups of your body.
You will be prescribed exercise such as walking, biking or jogging

**T: Time**- How long will I exercise for?
At the start of your program, you may do 10 to 20 minutes of aerobic exercise. Over time you will be encouraged to progress gradually up to 30 to 60 minutes.

The amount of time you exercise depends on the results of your exercise stress test, your medical history and your goals.

**How Your Exercise is Progressed**
Your Cardiac Rehab team gave you a written copy of your exercise prescription (see Figure 1. for an example of an exercise prescription). You will receive a new copy of your exercise prescription each time it is changed. It is important to fill out your exercise diaries so that your Cardiac Rehab team can progress your exercise safely. See Chapter 2—Safe Exercise for more information on how to fill out your exercise diaries.

Since your exercise prescription is tailored for you, if you have questions or concerns about the level of the exercise, discuss it with your Cardiac Rehab team. It is not safe to increase the level of your exercise (pace and distance) without speaking to your Cardiac Rehab team.
**Figure 1. Example of an Exercise Prescription**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise Prescription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong> Jane Doe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WALK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warm Up:</strong> Walk at a pace slower than your prescribed pace for 5-10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workout:</strong> Walk 2 miles (3.2 km) in 40 minutes, 0 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your training heart rate range is 102 to 114 beats per minute (bpm) or 17 to 19 beats in 10 seconds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) should not be higher than 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cool Down:</strong> Walk at a pace slower than your prescribed pace for 5-10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency:</strong> 5 times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you use a motorized treadmill for your exercise, manually set your speed on the machine as follows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm up: 2.7 mph for 5-10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workout: 3 mph for 40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool down: 2.7 mph for 5-10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cardiac Rehab Team Member