

## **What you Need to Know Before Starting Each Exercise Session**

**Aim:** Gradually progress your aerobic exercise to 30 minutes, 5 times per week (all at once or in segments and taking as many rest breaks as needed).

**How will I be able to stay safe during the pandemic during exercise?**  
Please follow the guidelines from your local health authority. If it is deemed safe to exercise outside then we provide some precautions.

Carry a walking aid with you (such as a cane), even if you do not really need it. This will alert people that you may not be able to move out of the way quickly.

Plan a route that has a wide path, especially if you use a rollator.

Plan a route that is not very busy or walk early in the morning when there are less people around. This will help you to maintain at least 6 feet (2 meters) away from others.

At an intersection, press the walk button with your elbow.

Remember to wash your hands after returning home from exercise. See the Heart and Stroke Foundation youtube video on handwashing technique for people with a weak/flaccid arm:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOj0L03eDPs&feature=youtu.be>

### **Can I walk inside my home?**

If you have barriers that prevent you from getting outside such as a long flight of stairs or you do not feel confident walking outside then consider walking indoors.

If you want to exercise on stationary home equipment like a treadmill or cycle then please refer to our guidelines for using and purchasing stationary equipment.

**Hallways:** If you have a long hallway at home, then walk at the speed determined using the instructions in the next sections. Use a stopwatch to time the walking duration and record this in your exercise diary.

## **Do I need to check my blood pressure before each exercise session?**

It is not necessary to check blood pressure unless your blood pressure tends to be low or high. Please refer to the detailed guidelines in the following document entitled “*Guidelines For Measuring Resting Blood Pressure At Home and Before Exercise*”

Note: Please contact your physician if your blood pressure is consistently low or high

## **Are there precautions I should take if I discontinue or reduce the dosage of my Beta-Blocker medication?**

Beta-blocker medications help to control your blood pressure. Some common beta-blockers are Atenolol and Metoprolol (ending in “...olol”).

You should not stop taking your medication unless directed by your physician. If you stop abruptly, your heart rate and blood pressure may be temporarily and possibly dangerously high.

- You may experience anxiety-like symptoms such as palpitations, tremors and excessive sweating. You may have an irregular heart rhythm and if you sometimes have angina (chest pain) it may get worse.

If you have stopped taking the medication on your own or experience any of these symptoms after stopping, please contact your physician immediately.

If your physician decreased the dosage of your beta blocker or asked you to stop taking it, then it is good practise to check your blood pressure before and after exercise, following the guidelines above.

## **Do I need to measure my Blood Sugar before and/or after Exercise if I have Diabetes?**

Please refer to the documents on diabetes included in this section.

### **Is it ok to exercise if I am not feeling well?**

Do not exercise if you have an **active infection or illness**. Wait until you no longer have symptoms and then start back at half of the exercise distance that you were doing before you became ill. It should take you about the same amount of time that you were ill to gradually ramp back up to the exercise pace and duration you were doing before your illness.

Do not exercise if you have experienced the following;

- sudden swelling in both ankles or swelling in the abdomen
- shortness of breath at rest or while sleeping and/or with activity
- persistent coughing or wheezing (white or pink blood-tinged mucus)

\*If any of the above is present, please contact your physician immediately.

### **How much fluid should I drink before and after exercise?**

After a stroke, some people lose the feeling of thirst and can easily become dehydrated. Therefore, even if you do not feel thirsty it is important to drink fluids. Being dehydrated can also result in a high resting heart rate and/or high blood sugar readings and in some cases very low blood pressure.

Water is the best choice. Drinking 1 cup before and after exercise is ideal. If you want to add flavour to the water, you can add fruits or vegetables such as cucumber or lemon slices. For more information refer to the document in the lifestyle section on activity and lifestyle tips.

\*Note: Alcohol should be avoided before exercise.

### **How soon after a meal is it safe to exercise?**

Wait at least 2 hours after a large meal before exercising. However, you should not exercise on an empty stomach.

You should aim to eat a meal within 4 hours prior to exercise. If you are not able to have a meal within this time-frame, then have a snack or juice before exercise and then have the meal post-exercise.

### **Nitroglycerin**

If you have been prescribed nitroglycerin by your physician then please make sure you have it with you during exercise.