HEART CONDITIONS

WHAT ARE HEART CONDITIONS?

There are several life-threatening diseases that can affect the function of the heart.

CHRONIC HEART FAILURE (CHF)

Occurs when the heart no longer effectively pumps blood to the lungs and the rest of the body. The most common causes of CHF are heart attacks, high blood pressure and diabetes.

CORONARY HEART DISEASE (CHD)

Affects the blood flow of the coronary arteries around the heart which supply oxygen and nutrients to the heart muscle. CHD is typically caused by fatty deposit build up in the vessels.

HOW DOES EXERCISE HELP HEART CONDITIONS?

Exercise can not only prevent development of cardiovascular disease, it can also help treat and alleviate symptoms of a number of cardiovascular conditions. Regular low to moderate-intensity exercise for people with CHD prevents the blood vessels narrowing further, prevents blood clotting, increases delivery of blood to the heart and helps maintain a normal heart rhythm.

These changes reduce the load on the heart at rest and during exercise, which helps to lesson some of the symptoms of CHD. Regular exercise helps to reduce the LDL (bad cholesterol) and increase the HDL (good cholesterol).

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Ensure suitable/prolonged warm up and cool down.
- Carry angina medication if appropriate.
- Be sure to consider medications side effects i.e. beta blockers, and make appropriate considerations for those with a pacemaker or internal defibrillator.
- Adequate rest breaks between exercises.

WHAT TYPE OF EXERCISE IS BEST FOR PATIENTS WITH HEART CONDITIONS?

Patients with chronic heart failure are encouraged to exercise, however must be stable (consult professional prior exercise).

You should aim to build up to a total of 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate intensity activity each week. Moderate intensity activity will make you feel warmer, breathe harder and make your heart beat faster than usual, but you should still be able to carry on a conversation without getting short of breath.

- Aerobic exercise is important in both forms of CHD (systolic and distolic), the greater your ability to increase exercise and functional capacity, the higher the outcomes on survival. Aerobic exercise should begin at 5-10 minutes and gradually increase as symptoms/fatigue allows. Examples include walking, swimming, taking exercise classes or playing a sport, but physical activity also includes everyday things like gardening and climbing stairs.
- Resistance training is extremely important as it will assist in increasing muscle size and strength, which is heavily decompensated in CHF patients. Resistance exercises should begin low in weight and high in repetitions. Examples include exercising with weights, working with resistance bands, heavy gardening or carrying shopping.

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Always seek professional advice from an Accredited Exercise Physiologist. Find one here: www.essa.org.au/find-aep