

Cardiac & Heart Failure Rehabilitation

Information & Advice for Exercise Physiotherapy Service

Welcome to Cardiac and Heart Failure Rehabilitation.

We hope you will enjoy it and benefit from coming.

Our aims are to help you:

- ♥ Reduce your risk of developing further heart disease
- ♥ Increase your fitness levels
- ♥ Improve your confidence
- ♥ Improve your quality of life

How should I start getting back into exercise?

It may be a while since you have exercised, so here are some tips to prepare you for exercising regularly.

While you are waiting to start the rehabilitation programme, try to build up your activities at home gradually, e.g. light housework, walking, etc. start gently for short periods.

How can I make sure I exercise safely?

If you have any injuries or other conditions which may affect your ability to exercise, seek advice before you start.

Plan when you are going to exercise during the day – and leave 1 hour between eating or drinking tea/coffee before exercising, 2 hours if you have been smoking, or 1 hour after a hot bath.

Don't exercise if you are feeling unwell or very tired.

Make sure you take your medication as and when prescribed and have **regular meals**.

Wear suitable clothing – comfortable, loose layers of clothes, which may be removed as you get warm, and comfortable, supportive shoes.

Take a bottle of water – to keep yourself hydrated when exercising.

Warm up – for 15 minutes. This will raise your heart rate gradually and prevent injuries. You may need to build up to this.

Listen to your body – it will tell you if you are doing too much or too little.

Don't continue to exercise through chest discomfort – angina is a warning sign. Take your GTN spray as advised or seek medical help.

If you feel dizzy or faint, slow down. If symptoms continue, gradually bring exercise to a stop and sit or lie down.

Avoid getting uncomfortably breathless - it is normal to breathe deeper and faster when exercising, but if you are becoming too breathless, slow down.

Cool down – for 10 minutes at the end of your exercises or walk to allow your heart rate and blood pressure to gradually return to normal.

Effort/Borg/RPE Scale

You are encouraged to use this scale to rate how each exercise feels to you. Think about how breathless you are and how your muscles feel while exercising. If an activity, e.g. walking, feels hard or you are very breathless, ease off a bit. If it feels very light and you are only slightly breathless, you could progress it by increasing your walking distance, time or speed gradually. However, only progress one thing at a time.

BORG SCALE / EFFORT SCALE

6	No exertion at all
7	Extremely light
8	Very light
9	Light
10	Somewhat hard
11	Hard
12	Very hard
13	Extremely hard
14	Maximum exertion

© Gunnar Borg, 1998

You can start using this scale at home from now on to monitor how you are managing your exercises and guide you when to progress the activities and exercises you are doing.

What will happen in Cardiac and Heart Failure Rehabilitation?

Fitness Assessment

Prior to starting the programme, your activity levels will be assessed. This will **not** be on a treadmill. The test will involve monitoring your heart rate, blood pressure and effort while you are walking, stepping or cycling for a few minutes in the gym. This will enable us to advise you on safe levels of exercise in the class and at home.

Your aims and goals, i.e. what is important to you, will be discussed and any other conditions you may have (such as arthritis) will be taken into consideration. Together with the results of your fitness test, a suitable exercise programme will be designed for you.

The Exercise Class

On arrival, you will be booked in by a member of staff.

For your safety, it is important for you to inform us of any changes in your symptoms, medication or treatment before you exercise.

The exercise class will start with some **warm up** exercises, either as a group or individually on a bike or treadmill.

Then, for the first few sessions, a member of staff will guide you through your own individual **circuit** of up to 10 exercises. This may include the use of equipment such as a static bike, step, rowing machine, treadmill, cross-trainer and trampet to improve your aerobic or cardiovascular fitness. You will also be given some resistance exercises using weights to build up your strength.

The staff will show you how to do the exercises safely, how to adjust the equipment and help you to settle in. Each exercise will be for a set time as prescribed on your sheet. You will be writing down your heart rate and effort after each exercise, so bring your glasses if needed.

Following this circuit of exercises, you will be guided through a **cool down** routine, either as a group or individually on a bike or treadmill.

Heart Monitoring and Pacing

When you are exercising, your heart rate will increase, to supply your muscles with enough blood and oxygen. The aim is to increase your heart rate steadily, usually to an optimal target rate, **Training Zone**, which staff will discuss with you.

During the classes we may use a **heart rate monitor** alongside the **Effort Scale** to monitor your response to exercise. You will be encouraged to build up your exercises to a moderate level that's right for you. As you gain confidence, you will learn how to progress and adjust the exercises so that you will continue to benefit from them when you are discharged from cardiac rehab.

*Please do not compare yourself with others, as everybody is different regarding their heart condition, recovery and previous fitness level. **Please work at your own pace.***

What happens after Cardiac and Heart Failure Rehabilitation?

Once you have completed the programme, you will be invited to attend a **final assessment**. The fitness test you completed prior to starting the programme will be repeated and further advice will be offered on how to progress your exercises and maintain the benefits of exercise long term. We will also advise if and when you can resume previous activities and sports or new ones you would like to try.

There are a number of local exercise groups including our community exercise classes and walking groups that we can recommend. We can also refer you to a local leisure centre. It is important to choose a form of exercise you enjoy as you will be more likely to keep it up, and to find ways to keep motivated such as walking with a friend or local group.

Who can I contact for further advice about exercise?

If you have any concerns or worries about exercise, please do not hesitate to contact your local Cardiac and Heart Failure Rehabilitation team:

St Woolos Hospital
Telephone: (01633) 238398

Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr
Telephone: (01443) 802265

County Hospital
Telephone: (01495) 768692

**Nevill Hall Hospital and Ysbyty
Aneurin Bevan**
Telephone: (01873) 732510

**“This document is available in Welsh/
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”**