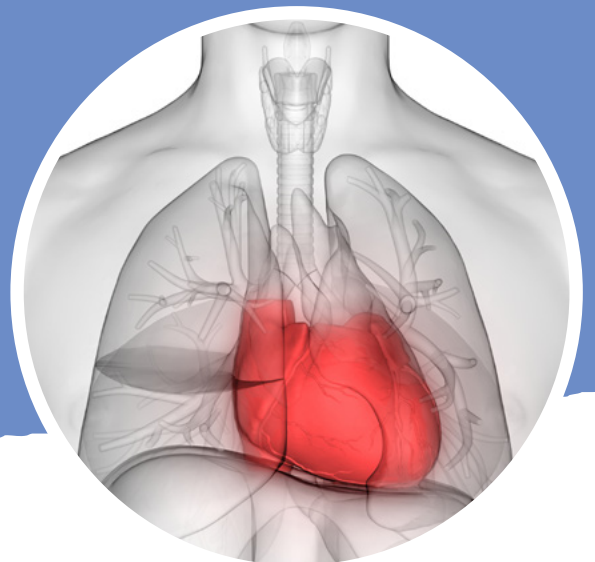


# Physical Activity for Heart Disease

This factsheet is for you if you have been diagnosed with heart disease (for example arteriosclerosis or angina) and your doctor or nurse has advised you to get more active or if you have recovered from a heart attack and want to develop a healthy lifestyle.

Use the information in this factsheet with the booklet *Get Active Your Way*. Order your free copy on [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)



## What is heart disease?

Heart disease is also known as cardiovascular disease. It is caused when the arteries, which supply the heart with blood and nutrients, become narrower and less flexible. Over time, it can cause the arteries to become blocked, causing angina (chest pain) or a heart attack.

**There are many different factors which contribute to the risk of developing heart disease, including:**

- family history
- age
- gender (middle-aged men and post-menopausal women have a higher risk)
- lifestyle factors such as smoking, diet and physical activity levels

# How can regular physical activity help?

## It can help you:

- reduce high blood pressure
- improve levels of good cholesterol (HDL) and reduce levels of bad cholesterol (LDL)
- reduce your body fat
- reach and maintain a healthier body weight
- manage stress
- sleep better
- feel better generally

If you have had a heart attack, being physically active regularly can help you recover faster, reduce your risk of having another heart attack and help you increase confidence to live an active life.

# How do I get started?

Use the booklet *Get Active your Way* to help you make a plan.

**Talk to your GP, they can help you set realistic goals that take into account your level of fitness, symptoms and medication.**



To get the most health benefits from physical activity, you need to be physically active at a moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes a day on five days a week (or for 150 minutes a week). Your GP may advise you to gradually build up your activity level and intensity.

# Had a heart attack?

- Make sure that you have fully recovered and have completed the cardiac rehabilitation programme
- Continue to take medication as prescribed. If prescribed a spray, always carry it with you
- Do a light warm up and cool down before and after an activity
- Drink plenty of water, particularly on hot days
- Try to walk on fairly flat ground. In hilly areas, walk slower so you don't put too much stress on your heart
- Avoid heavy lifting or pushing heavy objects
- If it is very hot or very cold, avoid doing physical activity as this can affect your circulation and breathing and can cause chest pain
- Ease back into your exercise programme if it has been interrupted for a few days
- Don't begin an activity directly after a meal



**Stop and seek medical help if you experience any of the following symptoms:**

- Pain or pressure in your chest area
- Fluttering in your chest (palpitations)
- Dizziness, light headedness or feeling faint
- Pain in your jaw, neck or arm
- Difficulty breathing
- Feeling sick or unduly tired
- Sweating with cold clammy skin
- Leg ache that slows down movement
- Shakiness, hunger and weakness

## Useful contacts

[www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)

[www.getirelandactive.ie](http://www.getirelandactive.ie)

