

Eight-Week Walking Program



THE OHIO STATE
UNIVERSITY

WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

This walking program helps improve heart health and fitness. Your healthcare provider or your cardiac rehab team will choose the right starting level for you based on how active you are now.

- Progress at your own pace
- Walk most days of the week
- Wear comfortable shoes to help prevent injury

About the program

If You Are Not Very Active Yet

This program starts slowly to help you rebuild strength and stamina safely.

- You will walk for short periods and then rest — this is called interval training
- Your walking time and pace will increase gradually
- Walk at pace that does not leave you out of breath
- You should still be able to talk in full sentences
- Walk most days of the week, as tolerated
- Only move to the next week when you feel ready
- It is okay to repeat a week if the effort feels moderately hard
- Take rest breaks or rest days if you feel tired
- Slow down or stop if you do not feel well — listen to your body

The goal is to increase activity safely, at a pace that works for your body.



Week	Walk	Rest	Repeat	Total walking time
1	2 minutes	1 minute	5 times	10 minutes
2	4 minutes	2 minutes	4 times	16 minutes
3	5 minutes	2 minutes	4 times	20 minutes
4	7 minutes	2 minutes	3 times	21 minutes
5	5 minutes	2 minutes	5 times	25 minutes
6	10 minutes	2 minutes	3 times	30 minutes
7	15 minutes	2 minutes	2 times	30 minutes
8	20 minutes	2 minutes	2 times	40 minutes

If You Are Already Somewhat Active

If you already walk regularly or exercise most days of the week, your provider or cardiac rehab team may recommend that you start at a higher level in this walking program.

- Walk at a steady, comfortable pace
- You should feel like you are working, but still able to talk
- Focus on walking longer before trying to walk faster
- Walk most days of the week
- Take rest days if you feel tired
- Repeat a week or slow down if needed — listen to your body
- Increase your pace only if approved by your provider or cardiac rehab team
- Add gentle hills or walking intervals only if instructed

Week	Time walking without stopping
1	20 minutes
2	25 minutes
3	30 minutes
4	35 minutes
5	40 minutes
6	45 minutes
7	50 minutes
8	60 minutes

Exercise safely

How Hard to Exercise

To stay safe and get the most benefit, use 1 or more of the following methods to check your effort:

- Talk test
- METs
- Heart rate
- Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE)

Talk Test

Use your breathing to guide your pace.

- You should be able to talk in full sentences
- You should not be breathless
- If you cannot talk easily, slow down

METs (Metabolic Equivalent of Task)

METs measure how much energy your body uses during an activity.

- 1 MET = energy used while resting (complete rest)
- 1 to 3 METs = light intensity (making the bed, washing dishes, walking very slowly)
- 3 to 6 METs = moderate intensity (brisk walk, washing windows, washing car, walking while golfing and pulling clubs)
- More than 6 METs = vigorous intensity (jogging, running, heaving farming or yard work, bicycling)

Heart Rate

Resting heart rate:

Check your resting heart rate before getting out of bed:

1. Find your pulse on the thumb side of your wrist
2. Use the tips of 2 fingers and press lightly
3. Count beats for 10 seconds
4. Multiply by 6

My resting heart rate: _____.



Hand checking pulse
(heart rate)

During exercise:

- Warm up for 5 minutes
- Check your heart rate
- Exercise at 20 to 30 beats above your resting heart rate
- Slow down if your heart rate feels too high

My exercise heart rate goal: _____ to _____.

After exercise:

- Cool down for 5 minutes
- Check your heart rate again
- Your heart rate should be within 10 beats of your resting heart rate
- If it is still high, keep cooling down

My heart rate after cool down: _____.

Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale

This scale tells how hard the exercise feels to you.

- A rating of **12 to 16** is a safe exercise level
- You should feel **comfortably tired**, not exhausted
- **Below 12:** You may safely go a little faster or longer
- **Above 16:** Slow down

#	Level of Exertion
6	No exertion at all
7	Extremely light
8	
9	Very light
10	
11	Light
12	
13	Somewhat hard
14	
15	Hard (heavy)
16	
17	Very hard
18	
19	Extremely hard
20	Maximal exertion

9 on the scale is “very light” exercise. It is like walking slowly at your own pace for a few minutes.

13 on the scale is “somewhat hard” exercise. You feel like you are working, but it still feels okay to keep going.

17 on the scale is “very hard” exercise. This feels very challenging. You can continue, but you have to push yourself. You feel very tired and heavy.

19 on the scale is “extremely hard” exercise. This is the hardest exercise you have ever done. It feels exhausting and very difficult to continue.

Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale
Developed by Gunnar Borg, PhD
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Take Home Message

Use these methods to help you exercise safely, comfortably, and confidently. If you are unsure, ask your provider or cardiac rehab team for help.

When to Call Your Provider

Stop exercising and tell your provider if you have:

- Chest pain, pressure, or discomfort
- Unusual shortness of breath
- Irregular heartbeat (too fast or too slow)
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Extreme tiredness lasting more than 1 hour
- Cold sweats
- Nausea or vomiting
- New or unusual muscle or joint pain
- Any other symptoms that worry you

This resource is for informational purposes only. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any questions about your care.