Physical Activity and Your Heart
Beating heart disease together

This booklet is for people who have a heart condition, and for those who are at a high risk of developing heart disease, for example because they have high blood pressure or a high cholesterol level.

In most cases, physical activity can:
• help improve your heart health if you already have a heart condition
• help your recovery after having heart surgery or a heart attack, and
• help improve many of the ‘risk factors’ which increase the overall risk of coronary heart disease. (We explain more about risk factors on page 18.)

This booklet explains:
• why physical activity is so important for the heart
• how much activity adults should generally aim to do
• which sorts of activity are best for your heart, and
• how to get started and keep going.

It also gives some information about physical activity for people who already have particular heart conditions, and for those who have recently had treatment for their condition, such as heart surgery or an angioplasty, or who have had a pacemaker or ICD fitted.

This booklet does not replace the advice that the health professionals looking after you may give you, but it should help you to understand what they tell you.

Why is physical activity so important for my heart?
The heart, like any other muscle, needs physical activity to help keep it in good condition.

The good news
• Physical activity can help to reduce the risk of getting coronary heart disease.
• If you have high blood pressure, a high cholesterol level or diabetes, physical activity can help to improve these conditions and help protect your heart.
• If you already have coronary heart disease (if you get angina or have had a heart attack), physical activity can help protect your heart and help to reduce your risk of having further heart problems.
• If you have another type of heart condition, regular physical activity can benefit your overall heart health.
• If you have recently had a heart attack or heart surgery, regular physical activity can help with your recovery.

About one in every five cases of coronary heart disease in developed countries is due to physical inactivity. Regular, moderate-intensity physical activity reduces the risk of developing coronary heart disease and can reduce the likelihood of dying from heart disease. However, about 7 out of every 10 women and 6 in every 10 men in the UK are not active enough to protect themselves against coronary heart disease.

Other Headings in Booklet

Other benefits of activity
What activity will help my heart, and how much should I do?
Getting started…and keep going
How physical activity can help reduce your risk of coronary heart disease
If already have a heart condition
What to do if you get chest pain
Physical activity as part of cardiac rehabilitation
Sex and heart disease
Safety tips
How your support can help

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