

## Guidelines for Safe and Effective Strength Training

Strength training, also referred to as resistance training, is an important component to overall fitness, and improves your health and wellbeing. Both strength and endurance are important for the safe return to activities of daily living and vocational activities. It helps you maintain independence, prevent falls, stem the loss of muscle mass and strengthen bones. It can decrease the pain of arthritis, improve control of blood sugar, and help with weight loss by boosting metabolism. Done correctly, it will benefit your heart, not hurt it. The American Heart Association endorses strength training as an important component of cardiac rehabilitation. Check with your cardiac rehab team or doctor about the right strength training program for you. Follow these guidelines.

- Participation in regular aerobic exercise for 2-4 weeks before starting a strength training program is recommended.
- Always warm up before strength training by doing some form of aerobic exercise for 10 minutes. This prepares your muscles for lifting and helps prevent injury.
- Initially work on form by using light weights. When confident, try a weight you can lift for one set of 8-16 repetitions (reps) to the point of feeling a little fatigue in the muscle. (Note: the same weight will not be used for all muscle groups.)
- Perform one set of each exercise at least twice a week but no more than three times a week. Always have at least a day's rest and preferably two days rest between sessions.
- When you can consistently perform 16 reps with a weight you may increase to the next weight. You will most likely then drop down the number of reps back to 8.
- **Never hold your breath.** If you find yourself grunting decrease the weight. Exhale during the most strenuous phase of the lift. Inhale during the easier phase. If you find this hard to do simply remember to **breathe regularly**. Take a moment to focus on your breath with strength training or any strenuous activity. You may find you are holding your breath. This increases your effort and makes the whole activity much harder than it needs to be.
- Slow and controlled is the most effective way to lift weights. Do not let momentum move the weight. Let the muscle work through its full range of motion.
- It is a good idea to release your grip of the weights between exercises, even briefly as this allows the blood pressure to return to normal between exercises.
- Stop the exercise if you feel chest pain, dizzy, palpitations, short of breath, or any sharp pains.
- Always stretch both upper and lower body after a workout.