



**IRISH HEART  
FOUNDATION**  
Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke

**BE ACTIVE**

and reduce your risk  
of heart disease  
and stroke



Regular physical activity can make you feel and look good. It can give you many benefits for your overall health. More importantly regular physical activity reduces your risk of high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke, as well as many other diseases.

**30 minutes of physical activity, 5 days a week, is good for your heart**



# Over 20% of coronary heart disease and 10% of stroke is due to physical inactivity.

## All it takes is 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week.

All adults, including older people, need to accumulate moderate intensity aerobic activity for a minimum of 30 minutes on 5 days a week.

### Accumulated...

... means you can build up to 30 minutes or more of activity over two to three shorter sessions or do it all in one single session. Either way you still get the same health benefits.

If you are breaking up your 30 minutes of activity over the day, any one session needs to be for 10 minutes or longer to get health benefits, e.g.:

- 2 x 15 minutes - 15 minutes gardening and 15 minutes walking
- 3 x 10 minutes - 10 minutes walking to or from work, 10 minutes dancing around the kitchen or 10 minutes cycling.

### Moderate intensity...

... means you will feel some effort, your heart rate and breathing will increase and you will feel warmer all over, just like you do during a brisk walk.

## **Aerobic activity...**

...means you are continuously moving over a period of time. Activities such as walking, cycling, dancing, jogging are all excellent aerobic activities as well as some household tasks such as vacuuming, cleaning windows, washing the car and gardening.

## **What type of activity is best?**

Any type of regular physical activity is good for you. For overall good health, include the following three types of activity.

- Aerobic activity is an activity that uses your heart, lungs and large muscles over a period of time. Walking, cycling, tennis and digging the garden are all aerobic activities. Aim to do at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity 5 days of the week.

**Aerobic activity is the best form of activity to keep your heart healthy.**



- **Strengthening** activities will keep your bones and muscles strong and will help you maintain good posture. Brisk walking, climbing the stairs, vacuuming and weight training are all strengthening activities and should form part of your activity on **2-3 days a week**.

- **Balance** activities will help improve your balance which can often deteriorate as you get older. Aim to do balance activities on **2-3 days a week** to reduce your risk of falls. Examples of balance activities include standing on one foot, standing from a sitting position, backwards and sideways walking, and walking on heels and toes.

Strengthening and balance activities are in addition to aerobic activity.



### **First get active**

You don't have to be sporty, join a gym or spend lots of money to be active. Try and be more active at home and at work each day. You will be surprised how a brisk walk to the shops and some gardening can add up to 30 minutes of activity in your day. Replace your minutes of sitting with minutes of activity - take the stairs instead of the lift, get up and move about during television ad breaks.

### **Be active at home**

- Give the car a rest. Walk or cycle to the shops, bank or restaurant.
- Walk the dog or take the family for a walk.
- Tackle housework - sweep, scrub and vacuum.
- In the garden - rake leaves, pull weeds and mow the lawn.
- Play active games with your children, for example hide and seek, follow the leader and ball games.
- Do some stretching during the television breaks.
- Avoid sitting for long periods.

When doing gardening or housework, take good care of your back and avoid overusing any one muscle group. Change from one activity to another every 15 to 20 minutes.

### **Be active at work**

- Cycle or walk at least some of the way to work.
- Walk during your lunch break.
- Stretch at the desk.
- Move about during the day.
- Climb the stairs instead of taking the lift.
- Walk to talk instead of emailing or phoning.
- Walk to the furthest bathroom from your desk.
- Be mindful of correct posture and avoid rounding your shoulders at the desk.
- Meet a friend for a walk instead of a coffee.

## Be active at leisure

- Get active with a friend.
- Start a new hobby that involves being active.
- Check out sports clubs and exercise classes.
- Look out for your local Slí na Sláinte\* walking routes.
- Try and include some vigorous intensity activities once or twice a week.

\* Slí na Sláinte, meaning path to health is an Irish Heart Foundation initiative. Find a local walking route near you on [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)

**Replace your  
minutes of sitting  
with minutes of  
activity.**



## Now get fitter

Now that you are including regular physical activity in your weekly schedule, you may wish to get fitter.

To gain even more health benefits and get fitter follow the F.I.T.T. formula.

**Frequency** – You are now active 5 days of the week. To get fit, include at least three sessions of continuous activity for 20 minutes three times a week.

**Intensity** – Increase your pace to a vigorous intensity, which will cause your pulse and breathing to increase much more than that of a moderate intensity. Jogging, cycling uphill and swimming continuous laps are all vigorous intensity activities.

You should not be active so much that you start to feel dizzy or faint, or that you are in pain. This could be a danger to your health.

You can meet the minimum goal of being active for health with vigorous intensity activity for 20 minutes three times a week or combine it with moderate intensity activity, e.g. vigorous activity, such as jogging, for 20 minutes two days a week and moderate activity, such as brisk walking, for two days a week.

**Time** – Gradually extend the length of your continuous activity from 20 to 40 minutes.

**Type** – Any activity is good for you. For best results include aerobic as well as strengthening and balance activities.

**Lose Weight** – If you want to lose weight, over time gradually aim to be active at a moderate intensity for at least 60 - 75 minutes each day and combine with a healthy eating plan.

## Warm up and cool down

Walk or jog at an easy pace for 5 - 7 minutes until you feel warm all over. Loosen up the joints and muscles by doing the following stretches:

Hold each stretch for 10 seconds.  
Repeat each stretch two to three times.  
Breathe normally and slowly.

### Shoulder roll

Lift your shoulders up. Circle them forwards and down. Now circle them up, back and down.



### Stretch the back of your leg

Put one leg in front of the other. Bend the back leg and ease back onto it as if you were about to sit on a chair. Keep your back straight. Feel the stretch along the back of the straight leg. Repeat on the other side.



### Stretch the front of your thigh

Use a chair or the wall for balance. Stand on one foot with your knee slightly bent and hold the other foot as shown. Ease your foot upwards until you can feel a slight stretch on the front of your thigh. Change legs and repeat.



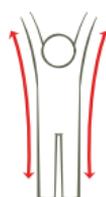
### Stretch your calf

Stand with one leg in front of you and bend the knee. Lean forward keeping your back leg and your back straight. Repeat with the other leg forward.



### Stretch your whole body

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees slightly bent. Raise your arms over your head. Slowly begin to stretch upwards.



# Activity Check

For each of the questions below, circle the box that best describes you

**Are you physically active in the home (for example gardening, vacuuming or cleaning windows or floors)?**

never

some days

every day

**Are you physically active at work?**

not active  
(sitting & driving)

light activity  
(some walking)

heavy manual  
labour

**Do you do any physical leisure activities (for example, walking, cycling or dancing)?**

never

some

most days

**When you exercise, do you do so:**

lightly

moderately

vigorously

**How would you describe your weight?**

more than  
two stone  
overweight

about two  
stone  
overweight

correct weight,  
or maybe a little  
overweight

**Would you describe yourself as fit for your life?**

very unfit

quite fit

very fit

### **Mostly green**

Well done. Keep up the level of physical activity in your daily routine.

### **Mostly blue**

Try to include more activity in your weekly schedule and aim to include at least three sessions of 30 minutes continuous aerobic activity

### **Mostly orange**

You need to be more active. Start gradually and work towards building up to at least 30 minutes of any activity on 5 days of the week at moderate intensity.

## Guidelines for being active

- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes, 5 days of the week. Activity can be spread over 2-3 shorter sessions.
- Choose an activity that you enjoy and makes you feel good.
- Take part in moderate intensity aerobic activities that get the whole body moving for a period of time, for example: walking, swimming, dancing and jogging.
- If doing more vigorous activity warm-up at the beginning and cool-down at the end.
- Set yourself a goal which is achievable, for example, a walk during lunch time three times a week.
- Wear loose clothing and supportive shoes with adequate cushioning in the soles for walking or jogging.
- Drink water before, during and after your physical activity, to prevent dehydration.
- Listen to your body - stop your activity if you feel unwell, have pain or feel dizzy.
- Consult your doctor before starting to be more active, if you are unsure or have a health problem.

**Choose an  
activity that you  
enjoy and makes  
you feel good**



## Please make a donation today

The Irish Heart Foundation is Ireland's only charity dedicated to the reduction of death and disability from heart disease and stroke. Over 90% of our funding comes from public and business donations. We depend on your goodwill and generosity to continue our work.

**If you found this booklet useful, please help our charity to continue to provide heart and stroke information by donating today.**

### You can make your donation today:

**By post:** Irish Heart Foundation  
c/o 4 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4

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

**By phone:** 01 6685001

### Personal Details

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (required for direct debit) : \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

### Credit card/Laser (one off donation)

Amount:

€25    €50    €100    €250\*    Other € \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number:

Laser Only

Exp Date:   /     Security Code\*\*:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

The Irish Heart Foundation is committed to best practice in fundraising and adheres to the **statement of guiding principles for fundraising** promoting transparency, honesty and accountability. Any personal information you provide will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003.

## Direct debit (monthly donation)

Amount:  €10  €15  €18  €21\*  
 Other € \_\_\_\_\_ per month

Bank Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sort Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Account No: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\* If you are a PAYE tax payer, gifts of €250 in one year (€21 per month) could be worth up to an extra 70% to us at no extra cost to you.

\*\* Last 3 digits on the signature strip on the reverse of your card.

Do you need a postal receipt:  Yes  No  
(saves cost of postage)

I am happy to receive IHF communications by:

Email  Phone  Post

I would like to volunteer to help the Irish Heart Foundation

- This is a guarantee provided by your own Bank as a Member of the Direct Debit Scheme, in which Banks and Originators of Direct Debits participate.
- If you authorise payment by Direct Debit, then
  - Your Direct Debit Originator will notify you in advance of the amounts to be debited to your account
  - Your Bank will accept and pay such debits, provided that your account has sufficient available funds
- If it is established that an unauthorised Direct Debit was charged to your account, you are guaranteed an immediate refund by your Bank of the amount so charged where you notify your bank without undue delay on becoming aware of the unauthorised Direct Debit, and in any event no later than 13 months after the date of debiting of such Direct Debit to your account.
- You are entitled to request a refund of any Variable Direct Debit the amount of which exceeded what you could have reasonably expected, subject to you so requesting your Bank within a period of 8 weeks from the date of debiting of such Direct Debit to your account.
- You can instruct your Bank to refuse a Direct Debit payment by writing in good time to your Bank.
- You can cancel the Direct Debit Instruction by writing in good time to your Bank.



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Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke

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

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

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



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**Funding:**

The Irish Heart Foundation is the national charity fighting heart disease and stroke and relies on charitable donations for 90 per cent of its funding. We support, educate and train people to save lives, campaign for patients, promote positive health strategies, support research and provide vital public information. We need your support - through donations, as a volunteer or on our training courses.

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Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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The information provided by the Irish Heart Foundation in this booklet was correct and accurate at the time of publication to the best of the charity's knowledge.

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