

## Warm up and cool down

**Walk or jog at an easy pace for five to seven 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**

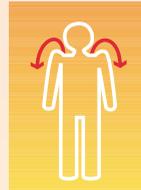
Use a chair or the wall for balance. Stand on one foot with your knee slightly bent and hold the other foot as shown. Ease your foot upwards until you can feel a slight stretch on the front of your thigh. Change legs and repeat.

### • **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

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

never	<input type="checkbox"/>
some days	<input type="checkbox"/>
every day	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 2 Are you physically active at work?

not active (sitting and driving)	<input type="checkbox"/>
light activity (some walking)	<input type="checkbox"/>
heavy manual labour	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

never	<input type="checkbox"/>
some	<input type="checkbox"/>
most days	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 4 When you exercise, do you do so:

lightly	<input type="checkbox"/>
moderately	<input type="checkbox"/>
or vigorously ?	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 5 How would you describe your weight?

more than two stone overweight	<input type="checkbox"/>
about two stone overweight	<input type="checkbox"/>
fine, maybe a little overweight	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 6 Would you describe yourself as fit for your life?

very unfit	<input type="checkbox"/>
quite fit	<input type="checkbox"/>
very fit	<input type="checkbox"/>

**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 about 30 minutes of any activity most days of the week.

## Guidelines for being active

- **Be** physically **active** every day. Choose an activity that you enjoy and makes you feel good.
- Take part in activities that get the **whole body moving**, for example walking, swimming, dancing and jogging.
- **Warm up** at the beginning and **cool down** towards the end.
- Try to **build up 30 minutes** or more of physical activity on **most days** of the week. Include exercises which **strengthen** muscles in the tummy and lower-back area.
- **Listen to your body** - stop exercising if you feel unwell, have pain or feel dizzy.
- **Consult** your **doctor** before exercising **if** you are unsure or have a health problem.

Guidelines are reproduced courtesy of the Health Promotion Unit of the Department of Health and Children.

### Local contact:

For more information contact:

**Your local health board**  
or  
**The Irish Heart Foundation,**  
4 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.  
Phone: 01 6685001  
Email: info@irishheart.ie  
Website: www.irishheart.ie

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# Get active for a happy heart



# Get active for a happy heart...

Regular physical activity is one of the main factors which reduces your risk of heart attack, along with not smoking and having a healthy level of blood pressure and cholesterol. Being active is the one factor that you can influence and change yourself without medication or treatment, and usually with very little cost.

## Being active:

- keeps your heart strong;
- helps to manage your weight;
- keeps joints moving;
- strengthens muscles and bones;
- helps you to relax and sleep better;
- gives you more energy and zest for life;
- helps you recover after a heart attack; and
- gives you a feeling of well being.

## How much activity?

All it takes is about 30 minutes of aerobic activity most days, such as brisk walking, swimming or dancing. You can include household tasks such as cleaning the house and gardening.

Build up to 30 minutes of activity over two to three shorter sessions if you prefer, for example 1 or 2 x 10 minutes walking and 1 x 20 minutes 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 physical activity that uses the heart, lungs and large muscles over a period of time. Some of the more common examples are brisk walking, jogging, swimming, step aerobics, cycling, dancing, active sports, and physically demanding housework and gardening.

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

**Strengthening activities and exercises**, especially those which work on the stomach and lower-back muscles, help you to stand and walk better. They reduce your chance of having lower-back problems.

**Stretching exercises** help suppleness and flexibility and should form part of every warm-up at the beginning and cool-down towards the end of an activity (see over). During the day, take time to stretch if you are standing or sitting for long periods of time.

## First get active

To get started, try and be more active at home and at work each day. You will be surprised how a walk to the shops and some gardening can add up to 30 minutes of activity in your day.

### At home

- Give the car a rest. **Walk** or **cycle** to the shops, bank and church.
- **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.

*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.*

### 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.

### At leisure

- Share some of the activities with a friend or partner.
- Check out sports clubs and exercise classes.
- Find out about local activities from the health promotion department in your local health board.
- Look out for your nearest Slí na Sláinte Route.



## Now get fit

Now that you are including regular physical activity in your weekly schedule, you can start to get fit. Most people just need to be fit for life, rather than to be as fit as an athlete.

**To be fit for life, follow the 'FITT' formula.**

- **Frequency** - You are now active most days of the week. To get fit, include at least three sessions of continuous activity for 30 minutes.
- **Intensity** - Increase your pace to a moderate level so that:
  - you are breathing a little deeper and faster (but not out of breath);
  - your heart is beating a little faster than normal; and
  - you are sweating a little (but not profusely)

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

- **Time** - Gradually extend the length of your continuous physical activity sessions from 20 to 40 minutes.
- **Type** - Any activity is good for you. For best results, include aerobic activity as well as strengthening and stretching exercises.

