CARDIOVASCULAR EXERCISE

Cardiovascular Exercise is defined as any activity that uses large muscle groups (such as legs) in a continuous motion for 20-30 minutes and raises your heart rate.

Benefits of cardiovascular exercise

- **Helps to manage weight:** The more you move, the more calories you burn, which helps to keep weight under control.
- **Strengthens heart and lungs:** Regular exercise helps the cardiovascular system function more efficiently, allowing you more energy to do the things you enjoy.
- **Helps reduces risk of Coronary Artery Disease:** Regular exercise can help prevent or manage high cholesterol and high blood pressure, which are primary risk factors for developing Coronary Artery Disease (CAD).
- **Decrease risk of diabetes:** Cardiovascular exercise will help you better utilize insulin in order to effectively regulate blood sugar levels.
- **Strengthen bones:** Weight-bearing activities such as jogging or fast walking can help to strengthen bones, which will reduce the risk of osteoporosis or slow the progress of the disease.
- **Reduces stress, anxiety and depression:** Exercise stimulates various brain chemicals which can lead to a happier more relaxed feeling after working out.
- **Promotes better sleep:** Regular exercise can help you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer. A good night’s sleep can improve your concentration, productivity and mood.
- **Improved immune system:** Having a stronger immune system will make it more difficult to catch a cold or other viral disease.
- **Raised metabolism:** Your metabolism (calories burned) will stay raised for a few hours after exercise.
How much cardiovascular exercise should I do?

The American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association recommend:

- A minimum of 30 minutes of moderately intense cardiovascular exercise 5 days a week.
- Up to 60 minutes of exercise may be needed if weight loss is a goal.
- Beginners should start slow and work up to 30 minutes. Begin with 10-15 minutes and add a minute or two each week. Choose a pace that will allow you to achieve 30 minutes.

If time is a major barrier, then exercise can be split into smaller increments. For instance, 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes at lunch, and 10 minutes in the evening would work. For optimal heart health the goal is to work up to 20 minutes of continual activity. However, every minute counts, and every minute burns more calories. For weight loss, the goal is to burn more calories than you consume. For heart health, the goal is work your heart continuously for 20 minutes.

How hard do I need to work?

When starting an exercise routine, building stamina up to 30 minutes of exercise is more important than increasing the intensity. Therefore, concentrate on duration first. The goal is to work at an intensity that you can maintain for the length of your workout. Make your pace as brisk as you can handle. An appropriate intensity is one in which your heart rate is raised and your breathing is increased, but you can still talk. If you can not talk, then you are working too hard. Always continue to challenge yourself. Your heart and lungs will start to work more efficiently, and exercise will become easier, so you should adjust intensity in order to continue to see results and challenge yourself.

How can I avoid plateaus?

- Interval training is a good way to add variety and intensity to a workout. Exercise briskly for 1-2 minutes, then exercise easily until you catch you breath, then briskly again. Work up to doing this for 20-30 minutes.
- Vary exercises: Walk, bike or participate in a group exercise class. Unless you are training for something specific, variety is a major key to seeing results and continuing to improve.

Please consult your doctor before starting any exercise program.