

# Class Exercise

## *A guide for heart patients*



**Association  
of Chartered  
Physiotherapists  
in Cardiac  
Rehabilitation**

Group exercise is exercise led by an instructor.

This advice is general because it covers a wide range of activities such as Zumba, Yoga, Pilates, Aerobics, Step classes, Spinning, Tai Chi and other group based activities.

For water-based activities see the separate ACPICR leaflet.

### **What are the specific benefits of class exercise?**

- Sociable and fun
- Improves your confidence and well-being
- Motivates you to exercise regularly
- Offers variety
- Session timetables may make it easier to commit to regular exercise



### **Exercise classes focus on increasing or maintaining**

- Aerobic fitness
- Strength and flexibility
- Balance and co-ordination

Due to the variety of exercise sessions available some may not be suitable for you because the intensity is too high or the level of supervision and instruction is not right for you.



### **How can I get in shape and when can I start?**

It is very important to attend a cardiac rehabilitation programme and inform the team of your wish to return to or start a particular session. When you start depends upon which session you attend, your current level of physical fitness as well as your general health. Your cardiac exercise professional will advise you when you are ready.

It is also very important that you are informed of what is safe exercise for you to reach during your exercise. As with any activity, start low and go slow, build up gradually and pace yourself. There are usually different levels within sessions, so it may be best to start at the lowest.

Initially you may find coordinating the movements challenging but this will gradually improve with repeated session attendance.



## How should I feel during my session?

Listen to your body and think about how it compares with how you feel in the cardiac rehabilitation programme.

You should feel your breathing rate has increased but you should feel comfortable and able to continue. It is fine to feel that you are exerting yourself, so long as you are not struggling. You shouldn't feel that you are pushing yourself to keep up with other participants in your session.



If you feel exhausted following exercise you may have worked too hard, for too long or the session may have been too demanding for you. Think about reducing the pace at which you are working or change to an easier session.

Stop exercising if you experience any chest pain, palpitations, dizziness or light-headedness. If the symptoms do not go away promptly with rest and/or GTN spray/tablets seek medical advice as soon as possible.

## What about warm up and cool down?

The exercises in the first 5 - 15 minutes and last 5 - 10 minutes of the session should be performed at a lower intensity and pace than those performed during the sessions main component.

The length of the warm up and cool down will be dependent on the length of the session, your present fitness levels, as well as the overall intensity.



## Other things to consider

- Watch the session before you join to check it's right for you
- Speak to the instructor if you have any concerns
- Try not to be influenced by the beat of any music
- Work at your own pace
- Avoid holding your breath
- Exercise only when feeling well
- Dress appropriately
- Don't exercise straight after eating a large meal
- If your session involves a combination of standing and lying exercises discuss this with your cardiac exercise professional to ensure this is safe for you
- Remember to take a bottle of water along with you



Produced by the Association of Chartered  
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[www.acpicr.com](http://www.acpicr.com)

This leaflet is not intended to replace the advice that your doctor or cardiac rehabilitation team give you based on their expert knowledge of your condition

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