Personalizing Your Exercise Program

Exercise

Warming Up
Before starting any kind of demanding physical activity, you’ll want to perform warm-up exercises to stretch muscles and loosen joints. This will lessen the risk of muscle strain or ligament damage. A good warm-up offers psychological benefits as well. Use this time to focus on the activities ahead and to get rid of tension. First, take your pulse and then do 5 to 10 minutes of stretching exercises and light calisthenics.

Adjusting The Pace
Gradually work toward your exercise goal. During your exercise period, take your pulse two or three times as your doctor directs. Adjust your pace according to your pulse rate and how you feel. If you exceed your target rate, or if you have chest discomfort, breathlessness, or palpitations, slow down gradually. Don’t stop suddenly.

Cooling Down
Never stop exercise abruptly. Otherwise, the amount of blood circulating back to the heart, which is still beating rapidly, won’t be adequate to meet your body’s needs. You need a cool-down period much as a horse needs to be walked after a race.

Gradually decrease the pace of your exercise for 5 to 10 minutes. Then do 5 minutes of light calisthenics and simple stretching exercises. At this point your pulse should be no more than 15 beats above your resting pulse. If you feel dizzy or faint after exercise, you may need a longer cool-down period.

Keeping Records
Keep an exercise diary. List the date and time, the activity and its duration, your heart rate, and any symptoms you experience. Tracking your progress will help you keep up your motivation, and the record you develop will help you and your doctor assess your program.