Having high blood pressure can lead to health problems such as heart disease, stroke, or kidney problems.

The good news is physical activity can help!

This handout describes:

- how much physical activity you should do; and
- how physical activity can affect your blood pressure.

**How much physical activity should I do?**

It is important to be active most days of the week. *Aerobic activities* can help improve and manage your blood pressure.

*Aerobic activities* work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, cross-country skiing and swimming.

The following table describes your aerobic physical activity “prescription.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often?</th>
<th>Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activity per week.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often?</td>
<td>This could be:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• shorter sessions: 10 minutes, 3 times/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• longer sessions: 30 or more minutes/day, 5 or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>more days/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How hard?</td>
<td>Try to work at a moderate-to-vigorous intensity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How hard?</td>
<td>This means:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• your heart beats faster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• you are sweating lightly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• breathing is deeper and faster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• you can still talk easily, but not sing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What aerobic activities would you like to do?

Note: A fitness professional or recreation coordinator can show you some safe exercises that work best for you.

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active
- **how often** you are active
- **how hard** you work

**How does physical activity affect my blood pressure?**

While you are **doing** an aerobic activity, your blood pressure changes.

- The top number (called systolic) will rise when you are active. The harder you work, the higher this number can go.
- The bottom number (called diastolic) will stay about the same. In some people it may drop slightly. This is normal.
- If your blood pressure is too high, your health care provider may 
  - tell you to monitor your blood pressure when you are active; or 
  - give you blood pressure ranges, so you can stay safe when active.

**Your blood pressure will be lower after you have done an aerobic physical activity.**

- This decrease in your blood pressure can last several hours. This is one of the reasons why daily physical activity is recommended; you get health benefits right away!
• Often, those with very high blood pressure will see the greatest change.
• You may see a larger decrease if your physical activity session is longer, or if you work harder.

What is your current blood pressure? __________________________

What is your ideal blood pressure? __________________________

**Blood pressure changes OVER TIME**

Over time, regular physical activity may help you reach a healthy blood pressure level.

**Fun Fact:**

Most people who become regularly active can lower their systolic blood pressure by *seven points* and their diastolic pressure by *five points*.

Such as:

• Blood pressure before becoming active = 154/98
• Blood pressure after 4 months of being active = 147/93

The more often you are active, the sooner you may see these changes.

*Keep it fun. Make physical activity a big part of your life.*
More benefits

Being physically active on a regular basis can give you many other benefits, such as:

- reducing your need for blood pressure medication;
- improving how well your heart works;
- giving you more control over your body weight;
- helping you to manage stress;
- improving how well you sleep; and
- boosting your energy and strength.

Remember:

- Aerobic physical activities can help you manage and improve your blood pressure.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Keep it fun! Make fun physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do today to start being more active?