



# The Staywell Programme

Improving heart health and fitness

## The Cardiac Rehab Centre

The Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre opened in 1976 to treat people recovering from heart attacks or heart surgery. The course of exercise combined with education and risk factor modification was designed to speed recovery from cardiac illness and to reduce to the minimum the risk of the illness recurring.

This is known as secondary prevention - prevention of further heart problems in someone who has already developed heart disease.

## Staywell

The Staywell Programme aims to prevent heart illness in people like yourself who have never shown any sign of heart disease - this is called primary prevention. The principles are the same as those for secondary prevention - which we have been successfully providing for more than thirty years. The centrepiece is exercise because it has such a good effect on all the risk factors and also on wellbeing. The Programme is also aimed at anyone who would benefit from exercise under the clinical supervision of our specialised team.

## What it is all about?

The most important thing you can do to maintain your future good health is to take regular exercise. This booklet has two purposes. The first is to explain why exercise is so important and to encourage you to take it up. The second is to give you a guide to the Staywell Programme.

## Why is exercise so important?

The most effective step you can take to live a long and healthy life is to take regular exercise. The fitter you are the less likely you are to become ill and the longer you will live. The best predictor of longevity in middle or older age groups is their level of physical fitness.

For those who are unfit the taking up of exercise is far more effective in prolonging good health and life expectancy than any other measure (except for giving up cigarettes if you are a smoker). It puts taking medication, like the ubiquitous statins, in the shade.



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## How much exercise?

There is a dose effect relationship for exercise - the more you take the greater the benefit.

The Department of Health has recommended the relatively modest target of 30 minutes of moderate exercise on five days a week. There is no particular science behind this - it is a figure picked from the air and is probably a compromise between significant benefit and how much exercise the average couch potato is likely to comply with. Setting the bar too low produces little effect but the higher you set the bar the fewer people will manage it.

This level of exercise is certainly a great deal better than none - for instance in one study of retired men, the mortality rate was nearly twice as high in those who walked less than 1 mile/week compared with those who walked more than 2 miles per week.

Nevertheless, where exercise is concerned, the more the better. Another study reviewed 500 runners, aged 50–59 and compared them with age-matched and sex-matched controls.

After 19 years, 15% of the runners had died but 34% of controls had died. Additionally, the average time until the onset of measurable disability was an astonishing

**16 years** later for the runners compared with the controls.

The health gap between the groups increased through the period of study and was still widening when the survivors were in their nineties.

## The overall benefits

Physical wellbeing - regular exercise produces a feeling of wellbeing and general good health.

Mental wellbeing - psychological health is improved by regular exercise with lessening of both depression and anxiety.

Weight control - obesity and overweight are prevented by regular exercise - and those who take a lot of exercise can usually be greedy with impunity!

Physical fitness - as mentioned above, physical fitness predicts how long you are likely to live but being fit has a wealth of other benefits - less breathlessness on exertion, speedier walking pace, more flexibility and greater ease in performing the everyday activities of daily life.

Disease treatment and prevention. There is an enormous range of diseases which may be prevented by regular exercise - and exercise is an effective treatment in nearly all of them.

## Example benefits

**Arterial disease:** Atheroma - sometimes known as “hardening of the arteries” - affects mainly the coronary arteries leading to heart attacks and the cerebral arteries leading to strokes. Both of these conditions are much less common in those who take regular exercise - and the treatment of each should include regular exercise.

**Diabetes:** Type 2 diabetes sometimes known as maturity onset diabetes, is a modern scourge mainly brought on by overeating and lack of exercise. Diabetes greatly increases the risk of heart attacks, strokes, gangrene, kidney failure and blindness. Regular exercise greatly reduces the risk of developing diabetes. Exercise is a vital part of the treatment of diabetes and proper diet and exercise regimes can cure this disease in some sufferers.

**Obesity:** Obesity is an increasing problem in our society - affecting about 30% of the population and set to increase to maybe 50% by the year 2050. Obesity increases the risk of many other conditions like diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and some forms of cancer.

Those who take exercise from a young age rarely become obese. The treatment of obesity once it is established is greatly eased by the combination of sensible eating and

regular exercise. Maintenance of a normal weight is made much easier by regular exercise.

**High blood pressure:** Regular vigorous exercise reduces blood pressure and also helps control weight - and obesity is a cause of raised blood pressure.

**High blood lipids:** Blood cholesterol is carried in the blood in two main forms - low density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) and high density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C). The cholesterol in LDL-C is being carried into the blood vessels and laid down in plaques which narrow the arteries and is sometimes called “bad” cholesterol. The cholesterol in HDL-C is being carried to the liver for excretion and is sometimes called “good” cholesterol. The ratio between the “bad” cholesterol and the “good” cholesterol is a better indicator of risk than overall cholesterol level.

About the only measure which increases HDL-C is exercise and this is probably one way in which exercise reduces arterial disease - heart attacks, stroke etc.


**Osteoporosis:** The thinning of the bones as we get older is reduced by regular exercise, particularly “impact” exercise - running and jumping.

**Depression:** Depression is less common in regular exercisers and exercise is an effective treatment in those suffering from depression. Even if you are not depressed regular exercise lifts your mood and gives a sense of improved wellbeing.

**Dementia:** As we all live longer dementia is becoming an increasing problem. Treatments for dementia - Alzheimer's disease is the commonest form - are mostly ineffective but regular exercise does reduce the risk of dementia and can help with its treatment.

**Frailty:** This is another greatly increasing problem in our ageing society. Lack of exercise is a huge contributor and those who exercise regularly are far less likely to become dependent later in life.

It does not matter much if at the age of 40 you are 30% less fit than you should be - but at the age of 85 or 90 it may make the difference between being stuck in a chair, waiting for your carer, and being to get up and look after yourself.



**Exercise should  
be an important  
part of your  
daily routine!**

## What is Staywell?

The Staywell Programme provides an introduction to exercise and is mainly aimed at those who are not used to taking much exercise - but who really need to!

We provide an "undergraduate" course of gym work - circuit training. This lasts for 20 sessions and should be taken twice weekly for ten weeks. The sessions at the Cardiac Rehab Centre should be supplemented by walking as your home exercise.

Most people take rather longer than ten weeks to complete their 20 sessions - holidays, coughs and colds being the main reason.

During the time you are with us at Cardiac Rehab, and for the rest of your life, exercise should become an important part of your daily routine. Therefore, it is very important that you **ENJOY IT!**

## Where are we?

At the Alton Cardiac Rehab Centre, which is behind the Sports Centre at the western end of Alton.

## The Programme

Dr Sally Turner, Sandra Letford and Dr Hugh Bethell direct the programme. Before you start, Sally and one of our exercise specialists will see you at the Centre. We invite you to attend twice a week for an hour each time and also to do unsupervised exercise - mainly walking - on other days.

Initially you will have a brief check; height, weight and blood pressure - and a bicycle test to measure your fitness and to find the appropriate level for you to start exercising.

You will need to attend an induction session prior to starting the course.

## Progressing

The amount of exercise you take at each session is decided by your response to the previous session. Your progression will be gradual and at no stage will you be pushed harder than you are able. You will also be encouraged to exercise away from the Centre and keep a record of your activities.

At the end of the course you will have a further exercise test to measure your improvement and you will be encouraged to continue to take exercise without medical supervision, either with us or on your own. We will keep your GP informed of your progress.

## Some other points

**Clothes** - Please wear comfortable clothes - T-shirts, shorts, track suits and trainers. No outside shoes are permitted on the sprung floor in the exercise room.

**Food** - Do not eat a large meal during the 2 hours before an exercise session.

**Exercise only when you feel well.** If you have a virus, tummy bug or cold, wait until the symptoms have disappeared.

**And finally** - Please remember that although the exercises will do you good, they should also be fun. We do hope you will enjoy the course.

## Walking and pedometers

We recommend that you use walking to increase the effectiveness of our fitness programme. You should walk for about half an hour on at least three days of the week when you are not coming to the Centre.

To monitor this, we strongly recommend that you have a pedometer. The purpose of the pedometer is to measure just how much you walk during the day and then to encourage you to increase that distance. If you have a "smart phone" you can easily download a free pedometer function.

Alternatively, we can recommend one to buy - usually about £15. For simplicity and accuracy, we recommend the Tri-Sport 3D Pedometer made by Realalt. This costs about £15 and can be bought through Amazon or we could get one for you.

Try to wear the pedometer all day. Carry your smart phone in your pocket or clip your pedometer onto your waistband as soon as you get going in the morning and leave it there all day (except when in the shower, bath or swimming pool!) only taking it off when you get into bed.

Start by walking at a comfortable speed and then increase the pace gradually so that the distance you cover in the half hour increases progressively. **The Talk Test** is a good guide for a suitable walking speed.

## The Talk Test

- If you can talk easily you are not walking briskly enough.
- If you can talk but feel warm and are breathing more heavily than normal you are walking at about the right pace.
- If you can't talk at all, you are walking too briskly, so slow down!

## Important points to remember and sensible precautions;

- Plan your route on firm, level ground to start with and as you gain confidence and fitness, increase the pace and introduce a more hilly terrain.
- You may like to take a friend or relative with you when you walk to help your confidence and enjoyment.
- Do not walk straight after a meal. Leave at least an hour after eating before taking exercise.

## Recording your exercise

Use your activity booklet to record your walking. It is very helpful for us - and should also be for you - if you could fill it in every day, including the number of paces recorded on your pedometer or pedometer app.

## Measuring your pulse rate:

You can take your pulse rate either in your wrist or your neck. Count the pulse for 15 seconds and multiply by 4 and do this before taking exercise and again immediately you finish.



# Cardiac *Rehab*

Basingstoke & Alton *Cardiac Rehabilitation Charity Ltd*

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**CardiacRehab1**

*We welcome your views so if you have any comments about this booklet  
and the information we have provided please contact us.  
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with your support!***

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to find out how you can make a difference***