

Plan Your Program

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Getting started on your exercise journey is often the hardest thing to do. Here are some simple steps to guide you in choosing what to do and how to do it

When can I start exercising?

Prior to your transplant you should be taking direction from your medical and allied health team on what exercise to do and what to avoid.

During early recovery from your transplant, you will be provided with exercise recommendations from a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist. It is important to follow the guidance provided to you.

The guidelines below have been developed to help you on your long-term journey once you've recovered from your transplant and your medical team has recommended you start doing some exercise outside of their care.

Remember:

- Exercise is safe for organ transplant recipients – in fact it is vital for staying healthy.
- Exercise will help with your recovery.
- Start slowly and increase your activity level gradually.
- Choose activities that you enjoy.
- Warm-up and cool down with each session.

Build your own program

Everyone is different and will commence their exercise program with different levels of fitness and ability. It is important to remember to tailor your program to suit your individual circumstances and don't push yourself too hard too early.

Choosing activities that you enjoy and doing them at your own pace will lead to longer term health and wellbeing.



We recommend you plan a weekly program based on:

1. Participating in aerobic exercise on most days of the week. This exercise could be walking the dog, meeting a friend for a walk or ride, swimming at the beach or pool (subject to wound healing), taking a group fitness class or playing/training with a sporting group.

Aerobic activities should increase your heart and breathing rates. Work at an intensity where you feel you could hold a conversation but would be unable to sing a song!

2. Resistance training on at least two non-consecutive days of the week. Resistance, or strength training, doesn't just mean going to the gym – although it could if that suits you! Gyms have qualified trainers who can help guide you with using equipment and getting the outcomes you're looking for.

If gyms aren't your thing, that's ok – there are plenty of other options, including some you can do at home. Yoga and pilates are fantastic ways to increase both your strength and flexibility whilst working at your own pace.

Strength training can incorporate use of your own body as the resistance. Ideas for training at home can be found in the Transplant Active Clubhouse on the Transplant Australia website at www.transplant.org.au.

3. Build some flexibility and balance exercises into your week. Start by including stretches as part of your warm-up and cool-down each time you're doing other activities. This will help improve your stability, mobility and range of motion, meaning you're less likely to get injured.



How much should I do?

Start with a manageable intensity and amount of exercise that is approved by your physiotherapist or exercise physiologist. If you're not sure how hard you can push yourself, use the Borg Scale (or a rate of perceived exertion) as an indicator and just listen to your body.

As you become more comfortable, gradually add 2-3 minutes to your routine to build over time.

Ideally, you should be aiming to build up to a minimum of 30 minutes of aerobic exercise on most days of the week.

Perform resistance training on at least two non-consecutive days of the week, with 8-10 different exercises that focus on major muscle groups (legs, arms, back and abdominals – subject to wound healing). We suggest you perform sets of 8-12 repetitions of each exercise.

Choose a weight that you can lift 8-12 times and by the end of the set your muscles feel tired but you can maintain a good technique without straining or holding your breath. One set of each exercise is a good starting point for muscle strengthening. Once this becomes easy (ie. your muscles no longer feel tired), increase the weight that you are lifting or add a second (or third) set of the exercises.

Allow at least one day of rest in between your resistance training days for your muscles to recover. When you initially start your exercise program, or when you increase the time or intensity, you may have sore muscles for the next few days. This is normal. However, if the pain doesn't go away after this time, it is recommended that you see your GP.

Aside from incorporating stretches into your regular warm up and cool down, we recommend doing at least 10 minutes of flexibility exercises 2-3 times per week.