



# Chronic Heart Failure - Why Exercise?

Chronic Heart Failure (CHF) occurs when the heart is no longer able to pump blood to the lungs and to the rest of the body. The two main causes of CHF are high blood pressure and coronary artery disease. There are different symptom classifications of CHF, therefore it is essential that medical clearance is received prior to undertaking any exercise programs.

## Benefits of Exercise for CHF

Exercise training is not a cure for CHF, although appropriately prescribed exercise can improve the following:

- ◆ Improved exercise capacity
- ◆ Improved quality of life
- ◆ Reduced breathlessness
- ◆ Reduced fatigue
- ◆ Reduce risk of mortality and hospitalisation

## Type of Exercise

- ◆ Aerobic (walking, cycling, swimming) - performed 4-7 days per week, at a moderate intensity, initially commencing at 10-15 minutes and gradually build to 45-60 minutes
- ◆ Resistance training (weight training, band exercise, bodyweight exercise) - performed 2-3 days per week, commencing at 20 minutes and gradually build to 45-60 minutes in line with functional tolerances
- ◆ Flexibility (tai chi, stretching) performed 2-3 days per week, stretching major muscles groups for 5-10 minutes

**An Exercise Physiologist can ensure delivery of a safe and effective exercise program in conjunction with evidence-based guidelines, which are tailored to meet individual functional status, needs and goals.**

### References:

- Craenenbroeck, E. (2017) Exercise training as therapy for chronic heart failure. *European Society of Cardiology*
- Piepoli et al (2004). Exercise training meta-analysis of trials in patients with chronic heart failure. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*
- Selig, et al (2010). Exercise & Sports Science Australia Position Statement on exercise training and chronic heart failure. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*

## Tips to Remember

- ◆ Medical clearance may be required prior to exercise participation
- ◆ It's important to enjoy the type of exercise you perform
- ◆ Prolonged warm up and cool down is necessary
- ◆ Start slow and gradually build; interval training is a great option with a 1:1 exercise to rest ratio during the initial stages of exercise
- ◆ Be aware of side effects of medications
- ◆ If appropriate, carry angina medication
- ◆ Avoid exercise during periods of high heat or high humidity
- ◆ Monitor for any post exercise increase in symptoms, such as excessive shortness of breath or fatigue, dizziness or confusion

