

Aortic Dissection: Activity Guidelines

The intensity of exercise can vary from person to person. Your surgeon will discuss your specific restrictions with you. All patients with aortic dissections will have some lifelong restrictions. This is because even after some of your aorta is repaired or replaced, your remaining aorta is at risk for further complications, including aneurysm, rupture or recurrent dissection.

If you have any questions, ask your physician or nurse.

Short-term limits

It is important to avoid activities that may raise your blood pressure.

- Avoid the Valsalva maneuver (bearing down) and straining.
- Avoid sexual activity for at least 6 weeks.
- Avoid activities that are very intense for short periods of time, such as jogging or running.
- Do not lift more than 20 pounds (weight of 2 gallons of milk) for at least 6 weeks.

Long-term limits

Exercise can usually be resumed after 6 weeks, but discuss this with your surgeon at your follow-up appointment.

Routine exercise is important for physical and emotional health. However, we suggest you take a cautious approach and limit activities that require extreme effort or exertion. The goal is to prevent further complications. Continue to avoid activities that may raise your blood pressure.

- Avoid Valsalva maneuver (bearing down) and straining.
- Avoid heavy weightlifting. Do not lift more than 50 pounds (weight of a large suitcase).
- Do not take part in contact sports.

Mild to moderate aerobic exercise is usually OK. Unless your physician tells you otherwise, you may do aerobic activity for at least 30 minutes every day.

Sexual activity after 6 weeks is generally safe if you allow for rest periods to allow your blood pressure to return to normal. Avoid extreme exertion during sexual activity.

We encourage you to discuss any activity concerns with a member of your healthcare team who monitors your cardiovascular health.

Activity guidelines

Safe activities

- Gardening
- Walking briskly
- Vacuuming
- Climbing stairs
- Dancing (leisurely)
- Swimming at a slow pace
- General housecleaning
- Bicycling (less than 10 miles per hour)
- Taking out the trash (less than 20 pounds for the first 4 weeks, then no more than 50 pounds)

Activities to discuss with your physician (usually allowed after 6 weeks)

- Bicycling
- Light jogging
- Tennis (doubles)
- Golfing (without pulling a cart or carrying clubs)
- Light yard work such as raking leaves

Unsafe activities to avoid

- Sprinting and running faster than 8 miles per hour
- Contact sports such as basketball or baseball
- Skiing
- Snorkeling
- Weightlifting
- Shoveling snow
- Chopping wood
- Mowing the lawn, unless using a riding or self-propelled lawnmower