Information Sheet for Comox Valley Take Heart & Breathe Well Exercise Program

Welcome to the Comox Valley Take Heart & Breathe Well Exercise Program. This handout has been prepared to help you understand how the program works and answer commonly asked questions.

What is the Comox Valley Take Heart & Breathe Well Exercise Program?

The Comox Valley Take Heart & Breathe Well Exercise Program is a physician approved and health professional supervised community exercise program developed in partnership with the Island Health and the Take Heart and Breathe Well Exercise Program, health professionals in the Comox Valley and Community Centres in the Comox Valley. Its aim is to support clients with heart disease and/or lung disease to exercise safely, improve quality of life, and live healthier lives. The program runs twice a week for twelve weeks, for a total of 24 sessions. The program cost is $399 (approximately $16/session), initial assessment cost $60. 10-15 participants start the program every 3-4 months. A subsidy program is available to clients on low income, and payment plans are available.

The Comox Valley Take Heart & Breathe Well Exercise Program Includes the Following:

- Referral by your physician or specialist
- Orientation Session
- An Individual Assessment
- Group Education and Discussion using the Living Well With COPD modules and St Paul's Healthy Heart Education modules
- Supervised Group Exercise Sessions - personalized to individual need

Intake Interview Session:

When you join the Comox Valley Take Heart & Breathe Well Exercise Program you will have an intake interview that lasts 30-60 minutes. During the interview, staff will ask questions about your health and activity level so they can tailor the exercise program to meet your needs. Wear comfortable clothing, a short sleeved shirt and supportive close toed walking shoes. Bring a list of your medications, and your nitro, puffers and glucometer if you have them.

Supervised Group Education and Exercise Sessions:

Group sessions are 2 hours. This includes 30-60 minutes of education and discussion regarding nutrition, exercise and activity, managing your condition, and stress and coping. The exercise component is 1-1½ hours, but you may not be exercising for that whole time. We will do a seated or standing group warm-up and/or cool down, balance and mobility, aerobic or cardiovascular exercise, strengthening and flexibility, whatever is appropriate for your condition and goals. You will start slowly and gradually, increasing your exercise time as you progress through the program. During the group sessions everyone exercises at their own pace. Your oxygen saturation, blood pressure, symptoms and heart rate will be monitored. Your exercise level will be adjusted to your needs and to how you feel before, during, and after exercise. While exercising, you may feel tempted to push yourself or compete with others. However, exercising beyond staff recommendations or approved levels places your health at risk.

Tips to Get the Most from Group Exercise Sessions:

Come on time. Remember that you will need to take five minutes to sit and relax before taking your resting heart rate and blood pressure. Please do not begin exercising before the formal session start time because the program deliverer will not be available. When the exercise session is over you will take your heart rate and blood pressure again. The program deliverer will assist you with this in the early stages. This is important to assess how your heart is responding to exercise. Please stay until this is done.

How Do I Exercise Safely?

- Tell staff right away if you feel unwell or experience unusual sensations, before, during, or after exercise.
- Take your medications at the usual time as prescribed by your Doctor.
- Let staff know if there are changes to your health or medications.
- Carry your nitro spray and/or Ventolin with you for every session.
- Bring a glucometer, quick sugar and snack if you have diabetes.

What Do I Wear to Exercise Class?

Wear loose fitting, comfortable, absorbent clothing. Supportive, closed heel and toe shoes are required for safe exercising. You need socks to absorb moisture and protect your feet from blisters. Bring a water bottle and towel. The exercise sessions occur at community recreation centers and space to store belongings is limited. Please do not bring valuables or leave valuables locked in your car or a locker.

Should I Eat Before Exercise Class?

Avoid eating a heavy meal two hours before exercise. To prevent low blood sugar eat a light snack 1 hr before you exercise. If you have diabetes always carry a snack and a glucometer with you to exercise class.

Should I Come to Class If I'm Sick?

When you are ill your body needs rest and time to recover. Stay home and return to the program when you are feeling better. A grace period of up to two weeks may be added to the program due to illness. Time missed for work or vacations cannot be reimbursed or made up.

What Happens When I Finish the Program?

When you have completed the program, a progress report will be sent to your doctor. This is just the beginning! Continuing to exercise regularly is important to maintain your fitness level and heart health, and you will have to tools to continue exercising. A supervised maintenance program is offered for graduates.

Refund policy: Pro-rated refunds (including a 25% admin. fee) will only be issued for medical reasons.

Congratulations on your decision to take an active role in improving your health by joining the Comox Valley Take Heart & Breathe Well Exercise Program. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to ask.

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