

Information sources

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Information sheet 1: Cardiovascular disease

Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death globally

World Health Organization: [Cardiovascular diseases \(CVDs\)](#). 31 July 2025

20.5 million lives are lost each year through cardiovascular disease (CVD)

World Heart Federation: [CVD Prevention | What We Do | World Heart Federation](#)

30% of all global deaths are caused by CVD

World Health Organization: [Cardiovascular diseases \(CVDs\)](#). 31 July 2025

85% of these are due to heart attack and stroke

World Health Organization: [Cardiovascular diseases \(CVDs\)](#). 31 July 2025

>3/4 of CVD deaths occur in low- and middle income countries

World Health Organization: [Cardiovascular diseases \(CVDs\)](#). 31 July 2025

Prevention

Most CVDs can be prevented by addressing behavioural and environmental risk factors:

- **tobacco use**
- **unhealthy diet and obesity**
- **physical inactivity**
- **harmful use of alcohol**
- **air pollution**

Globally, high blood pressure is the leading risk factor for CVD

World Health Organization: [Cardiovascular diseases \(CVDs\)](#). July 2025

World Heart Federation: [CVD Prevention | What We Do | World Heart Federation](#)

What is cardiovascular disease?

CVD is a general term for conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels. These conditions can make it harder for blood, oxygen, and nutrients to move around the body the way they should.

Over time, blood vessels can become narrowed, stiff, or blocked, and the heart may have to work harder than normal. This can reduce blood flow to important organs like the brain, heart, and muscles, increasing the risk of problems such as heart attack or stroke.

How can physiotherapy help prevent CVD?

Physiotherapists are part of the healthcare team that provides patient-centred care. They:

- can help identify people at higher risk of heart disease, such as those with high blood pressure, diabetes, or obesity, or people who lead an inactive lifestyle, and assess how well a person can move and exercise
- design safe, personalised exercise programmes to improve fitness and lower heart disease risk, and support healthy lifestyle changes, such as being more active and managing weight
- promote early detection and early action to prevent serious health problems, and spot warning signs and refer patients to further medical care when needed

World Health Organization: [Package of interventions for Rehabilitation, Module 4, Cardiopulmonary conditions](#)

American Heart Association: [Lifestyle Changes to Prevent a Heart Attack](#)

British Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation (BACPR): [Standards and Core Components for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Rehabilitation 2023](#)

European Society of Cardiology: [ESC Clinical Practice Guidelines on Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Clinical Practice: What Patients Need to Know](#)

World Heart Federation: [CVD Prevention | What We Do | World Heart Federation](#)

How can physiotherapy help people who have CVD?

A physiotherapist can help people manage their CVD, and reduce the chance of further cardiac events (eg a heart attack) by:

- helping to identify an individual's main risk factors and advise on how to make permanent healthy lifestyle changes
- providing tailored exercise programmes and help people overcome any fears they may have about exercising
- educating people on the best ways to help prevent further heart problems
- improving fitness, helping people stay active and enjoy a better quality of life
- offering advice and support on how to self-manage the condition

World Health Organization: [Package of interventions for Rehabilitation, Module 4, Cardiopulmonary conditions](#)

Ngeh EN, Lowe A, Garcia C, McLean S. [Physiotherapy-Led Health Promotion Strategies for People with or at Risk of Cardiovascular Diseases: A Scoping Review](#). *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2023; 20(22):7073. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20227073>

Best exercises for heart health

Aerobic exercise keeps your heart healthy: it makes everyday activities easier, so you feel less tired or short of breath. It can also improve your mood, help you sleep better, and lower your risk of heart problems.

Resistance training builds strength: as you get stronger you can do daily activities and exercise more easily, and with less effort.

Balance and flexibility exercises help you move safely: stretching keeps your muscles from becoming tight, helping you move more easily, and reduce pain or injury. Balance exercises help you stay steady and lower your risk of falls.

British Heart Foundation: [Best exercises for heart health](#). March 2026

Information sheet 2: Stroke

1 in 4 of us will have a stroke in our lifetime, but almost all strokes can be prevented

World Stroke Organization: [Prevent stroke](#)

What is a stroke?

A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is suddenly reduced or stopped. A stroke is a medical emergency and needs immediate treatment.

Ischaemic stroke - caused by a blood clot blocking a blood vessel in the brain

Haemorrhagic stroke - caused by a blood vessel in the brain bursting and bleeding

Transient ischaemic attack (TIA) - a temporary blockage sometimes called a “mini stroke”, this can be a warning sign of a future stroke

World Health Organization: [Stroke](#). December 2025

How can physiotherapy help prevent a stroke?

Physiotherapists play an important role in reducing stroke risk, especially by supporting people to be more physically active and manage long term health conditions.

Just 30 minutes of exercise five times a week can reduce your risk of stroke by 25%.

World Stroke Organization: [Stroke and exercise](#)

Regular physical activity can reduce the risk of stroke, as well as lower the risk of having another stroke after a first one.

World Stroke Organization: [Stroke and exercise](#)

Gallanagh S, Quinn TJ, Alexander J, Walters MR. [Physical activity in the prevention and treatment of stroke](#). ISRN Neurol. 2011;2011:953818. doi: 10.5402/2011/953818. Epub 2011 Oct 1. PMID: 22389836; PMCID: PMC3263535

Stroke Foundation: [Prevent stroke](#)

American Stroke Association: [Preventing another stroke](#)

Physiotherapists can help you to:

- **increase regular physical activity, which lowers blood pressure, improves cholesterol and blood sugar control, reduces body weight, and can help with managing depression and stress**
- **reduce the amount of time spent sitting, and show you how to include small amounts of activity in your daily life**
- **recommend safe, tailored exercise for people who may have other health conditions and find it hard to exercise**

World Health Organization: [Stroke](#). December 2025

World Stroke Organization: [Stroke and exercise](#)

How can physiotherapy help after a stroke?

Rehabilitation is an important part of recovery after a stroke - it helps people get back to doing everyday activities, improves quality of life, and supports independence as much as possible.

Rehabilitation usually starts within the first 48 hours, once the person is medically stable. Starting early can help recovery and confidence.

Bernhardt J, Churilov L, Ellery F, Parsons B, Pandian J, Martins S, Ali KMD, Robinson T, Donnan GA, on Behalf of the Avert Dose Trialist Collaboration. [ABSTRACT NUMBER: ESOC2026LT38 LT38 - AVERT DOSE: A PHASE III, MULTI-ARM, ADAPTIVE RANDOMISED TRIAL TO DETERMINE OPTIMAL EARLY \(<48 HR START\) MOBILITY TRAINING IN PATIENTS WITH MILD & MODERATE ISCHAEMIC STROKE](#). *European Stroke Journal*, 2026, DO 10.1093/esj/aakag023.1856

Medscape: [Once daily, 10 minute rehab may be enough in mild stroke](#). Sue Hughes. 8 May 2026

The Florey. [AVERT DOSE | Determining the most effective mobility training program early after stroke](#)

World Health Organization: [Stroke](#). December 2025

Recovery from stroke will involve a healthcare team - as well as physiotherapists it may also include doctors, nurses, occupational therapists and speech pathologists. It is important that an individualised plan is developed for you.

Australian Physiotherapy Association: [Choose physio for stroke recovery](#)

How is physiotherapy a core part of stroke rehabilitation?

After a stroke, many people experience problems with movement, balance, walking, using their arms, strength, fitness, fatigue, and independence.

Tang E, Moran N, Cadman M, Hill S, Sloan C, Warburton E, on behalf of the guideline committee. [Stroke rehabilitation in adults: summary of updated NICE guidance](#). *BMJ* 2024; 384 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.q498> (Published 22 March 2024)

Maso I, Luvizutto GJ, Miranda JMA, Nascimento CFD, Bonome LAM, Pinto EB, Klitzke FM, Souza RM, Moro CHC, Bazan R, Jesus PAP, Rocha EMC, Minelli C, Martins SO, Baggio JAO. [A physiotherapy protocol* for stroke patients in acute hospital settings: expert consensus from the Brazilian early stroke rehabilitation task force](#). *Arq Neuropsiquiatr*. 2025 Apr;83(4):1-18. doi: 10.1055/s-0045-1806924. Epub 2025 Apr 22. PMID: 40262822; PMCID: PMC12020504.

Physiotherapists are the exercise experts and can help people who have had a stroke to:

- **improve movement and strength in arms and legs so you can get back to living independently and doing the things you enjoy**
- **learn how to walk again, and how walk further and faster**
- **improve balance to minimise risk of falling** [Canadian Stroke Best Practices: [NEW Delivery Of Stroke Rehabilitation to Optimize Functional Recovery. 5. Falls Prevention and Management](#)] – **73% of stroke survivors fall in the first year post stroke** [Denissen S, Staring W, Kunkel D, Pickering RM, Lennon S, Geurts AC, Weerdesteyn V, Verheyden GS. [Interventions for preventing falls in people after stroke](#). *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2019 Oct 1;10(10):CD008728. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD008728.pub3. PMID: 31573069; PMCID: PMC6770464]
- **improve stiffness, pain, and muscle tightness**
- **help you get fitter so that your heart and lungs work more efficiently**
- **improve your mood, decrease fatigue, and help fight depression**
- **practice everyday activities such as getting out of a chair, walking and talking at the same time, getting dressed, and using your arms to use items such as keys and taps**

Shahid J, Kashif A, Shahid MK. [A Comprehensive Review of Physical Therapy Interventions for Stroke Rehabilitation: Impairment-Based Approaches and Functional Goals](#). *Brain Sci*. 2023 Apr 25;13(5):717. doi: 10.3390/brainsci13050717. PMID: 37239189; PMCID: PMC10216461

Du, M., Chen, L., Li, Y. *et al.* [Effect of exercise-based interventions on stroke rehabilitation: an umbrella review of systematic reviews and meta-analyses](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12984-025-01781-y). *J NeuroEngineering Rehabil* **22**, 240 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12984-025-01781-y>

Australian Physiotherapy Association: [Five facts about physiotherapy and stroke](#). August 2025

Canadian Stroke Best Practices: [NEW Delivery Of Stroke Rehabilitation to Optimize Functional Recovery](#)

Stroke Foundation: Physiotherapy, [Physical Exercise and Stroke: What you need to know](#)

Pang MYC, Yang L, Ouyang H, Lam FMH, Huang M, Jehu DA. [Dual-Task Exercise Reduces Cognitive-Motor Interference in Walking and Falls After Stroke](#). STROKEAHA. 2018. doi: 10.1161/STROKEAHA.118.022157

How much exercise?

Exercise-based physiotherapy has been shown to improve physical function, mobility, balance, and quality of life at all stages of recovery — from hospital care to long term community rehabilitation.

Du, M., Chen, L., Li, Y. *et al.* [Effect of exercise-based interventions on stroke rehabilitation: an umbrella review of systematic reviews and meta-analyses](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12984-025-01781-y). *J NeuroEngineering Rehabil* **22**, 240 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12984-025-01781-y>

Dang, C., Lu, Y., Xiong, Y. *et al.* [Effectiveness of physical rehabilitation approaches in improving function and mobility after stroke: comprehensive insights from a Cochrane systematic review](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10072-025-08243-2). *Neurol Sci* **46**, 4229–4231 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10072-025-08243-2>

A physiotherapist can help you safely increase the amount of exercise you do to reach your goals. You can start small to reach these recommendations:

- **moderate intensity aerobic exercise for at least 10 minutes 4 times per week**
- **keep active throughout the day to reduce sitting time**
- **6,500 to 8,500 steps daily**

Kleindorfer Dawn, Towfighi A, Chaturvedi S, Cockroft KM, Gutierrez J, Lombardi-Hill D, Kamel H, Kernan WN, Kittner SJ, Leira EC, Lennon O, Meschia JF, Nguyen TN, Pollak PM, Santangeli P, Sharrief AZ, Smith SC, Turan TN, Williams LS. [2021 Guideline for the Prevention of Stroke in Patients with Stroke and Transient Ischemic Attack: A Guideline from the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association](#). 2021/07/01. *Stroke*. doi: 10.1161/STR.0000000000000375

Espenberger K, Fini NA, Peiris CL. [Physical activity patterns in independently mobile adult stroke survivors: an in depth, exploratory, observational study](#). 2025. *Disability and Rehabilitation*. DOI: 10.1080/09638288.2025.2471571

Canadian Stroke Best Practices: [NEW Delivery Of Stroke Rehabilitation to Optimize Functional Recovery](#)

[4. Lower Extremity, Balance, Mobility and Aerobic Training](#)

Ding D, Nguyen B, Nau T *et al.* [Daily steps and health outcomes in adults: a systematic review and dose-response meta-analysis](#). *The Lancet Public Health*, 2025; 10, e668-e681

Australian Physiotherapy Association: [Five facts about physiotherapy and stroke](#). August 2025

Physiotherapists play an important role in helping prevent another stroke. They work with people to make everyday lifestyle changes that can reduce the risk of a second stroke, support better health, and help avoid long-term disability.

Australian Physiotherapy Association: [Choose physio for stroke recovery](#)

National and international guidelines recommend regular, sufficiently intense physiotherapy as part of stroke care, tailored to the person's goals and abilities.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE): [Stroke rehabilitation in adults](#). NICE guideline NG236, 2023

Tang E, Moran N, Cadman M, Hill S, Sloan C, Warburton E, on behalf of the guideline committee. [Stroke rehabilitation in adults: summary of updated NICE guidance](#). *BMJ* 2024; 384 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.q498> (Published 22 March 2024)

Information sheet 3: Noncommunicable diseases

Noncommunicable diseases impact people of every age and nationality

43 million died of a noncommunicable disease (NCD) in 2021

18 million people died from an NCD before age 70 years

73% of all NCD deaths are in low and middle income countries (LMICs)

World Health Organization: [Noncommunicable diseases](#)

What are noncommunicable diseases?

NCDs are long term conditions that are not infectious and often develop slowly over many years.

The most common NCDs are:

- cardiovascular diseases (such as heart attack and stroke)
- cancer
- chronic lung diseases (such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- diabetes

What increases the risk of NCDs?

NCDs are often linked to everyday habits and environments, including:

- not being physically active
- unhealthy diets (too much salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats)
- smoking or exposure to tobacco smoke
- harmful use of alcohol
- air pollution

These factors can lead to:

- high blood pressure
- high blood sugar
- high cholesterol
- overweight or obesity

World Health Organization: [Noncommunicable diseases](#)

Peters R, Ee N, Peters J, Beckett N, Booth A, Rockwood K, Anstey KJ. [Common risk factors for major noncommunicable disease, a systematic overview of reviews and commentary: the implied potential for targeted risk reduction](#). *Ther Adv Chronic Dis*. 2019 Oct 15;10:2040622319880392. doi: 10.1177/2040622319880392

Why prevention matters

Many NCDs can be prevented or delayed. Small daily habits can make a big difference:

- move more, sit less
- eat a balanced, healthy diet
- don't smoke
- limit alcohol
- get regular health checks

Early detection, support, and treatment help people live longer, healthier lives and reduce the need for more serious care later.

World Health Organization: [Noncommunicable diseases](#)

Peters R, Ee N, Peters J, Beckett N, Booth A, Rockwood K, Anstey KJ. [Common risk factors for major noncommunicable disease, a systematic overview of reviews and commentary: the implied potential for targeted risk reduction](#). *Ther Adv Chronic Dis*. 2019 Oct 15;10:2040622319880392. doi: 10.1177/2040622319880392

Benefits of exercise

Physiotherapists are the movement and exercise experts. They can design an exercise programme tailored for your ability, fitness level and goals. Getting active can also help you:

- **boost energy and sleep better**
- **control your weight**
- **improve your aerobic fitness, so your heart and lungs work more efficiently**
- **reduce blood pressure and cholesterol, lowering your risk of CVDs**
- **help you feel less stressed and improve your mood**
- **reduce your risk of developing type-2 diabetes**
- **reduce your risk of developing some cancers**
- **improve your balance, and reduce your risk of falls**

World Health Organization: [Physical activity](#)

British Heart Foundation: [Staying active](#). June 2025

Moore SC, Lee I-Min, Weiderpass E, Campbell PT, Sampson JN, Kitahara CM, Keadle SK, Arem H, Berrington de Gonzalez A, Hartge P, Adami H-O, Blair CK, Borch KB, Boyd E, Check DP, Fournier A, Freedman ND, Gunter M, Johansson M, Khaw K-T, Linet MS, Orsini N, Park Y, Riboli E, Robien K, Schairer C, Sesso H, Spriggs M, Van Dusen R, Wolk A, Matthews CE, Patel AV. [Association of Leisure-Time Physical Activity With Risk of 26 Types of Cancer in 1.44 Million Adults](#). 2016. *JAMA Intern Med*. 10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.1548

Most NCDs can be prevented or delayed.

A physiotherapist can help you make healthy choices and stay active, to live a longer, healthier, and more active life.

World Health Organization: [Noncommunicable diseases](#)

Katzmarzyk PT, Friedenreich C, Shiroma EJ, Lee I-Min. [Physical inactivity and non-communicable disease burden in low-income, middle-income and high-income countries](#). 2022. *Br J Sports Med*. 10.1136/bjsports-2020-103640

Information sheet 4: Move more, at every age

31% of adults and 80% of adolescents do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity

WHO: [Physical activity](#)

Strain T, Flaxman S, Guthold R et al. [National, regional, and global trends in insufficient physical activity among adults from 2000 to 2022: a pooled analysis of 507 population-based surveys with 5.7 million participants](#). *The Lancet Global Health*, 2024; 12, e1232-e1243. doi: 10.1016/S2214-109X(24)00150-5

Guthold R, Stevens GA, Riley LM, Bull FC. [Global trends in insufficient physical activity among adolescents: a pooled analysis of 298 population-based surveys with 1.6 million participants](#). *The Lancet, Child & Adolescent Health*. 2020 Jan; 4(1):23-35. doi: 10.1016/S2352-4642(19)30323-2

Why does being active matter?

Regular physical activity:

- **protects against heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers**

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- **lowers the risk of obesity**
 - **improves mental health, mood and sleep**
 - **helps children grow strong and develop well**
 - **helps older adults stay independent and avoid falls**
 - **helps keep the brain healthy and can lower the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease**
 - **improves memory, attention, and thinking skills across all ages**

Singh B, Bennett H, Miatke A, Dumuid D, Curtis R, Ferguson T, Brinsley J, Szeto K, Petersen JM, Gough C, Eglitis E, Simpson CE, Ekegren CL, Smith AE, Erickson KI, Maher C. [Effectiveness of exercise for improving cognition, memory and executive function: a systematic umbrella review and meta-meta-analysis](#). *Br J Sports Med*. 2025 Jun 3;59(12):866-876. doi: 10.1136/bjsports-2024-108589

Iso-Markku P, Kujala UM, Knittle K, et al. [Physical activity as a protective factor for dementia and Alzheimer's disease: systematic review, meta-analysis and quality assessment of cohort and case-control studies](#). *Br J Sports Med* 2022;**56**:701-709. doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2021-104981

Iso-Markku P, Aaltonen S, Kujala UM, et al. [Physical Activity and Cognitive Decline Among Older Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis](#). *JAMA Netw Open*. 2024;7(2):e2354285. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.54285

Start early. Stay active. Keep moving for life.

Physical activity at any age improves health, independence, and quality of life

A physiotherapist can advise on how to exercise safely and reach recommended activity levels

WHO: [Physical activity](#)

Hanssen H, Moholdt T, Bahls M, Biffi A, Siegrist M, Lewandowski AJ, Biondi-Zoccai G, Cavarretta E, Kokkvoli A, Løchen M-L, Maestrini V, Salvador Pinto R, Palermi S, Thivel D, Wojcik M, Hansen D, Van Craenenbroeck EM, Weghuber D, Kraenkel N, Tiberi M. [Lifestyle interventions to change trajectories of obesity-related cardiovascular risk from childhood onset to manifestation in adulthood: a joint scientific statement of the task force for childhood health of the European Association of Preventive Cardiology and the European Childhood Obesity Group](#). *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*, Volume 30, Issue 14, October 2023, Pages 1462–1472, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurjpc/zwad152>

Activity guidelines and Should I sit less?

World Health Organization: [WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour](#). November 2020

Poster 1: Cardiovascular disease

Find out how you can become more active to prevent and manage cardiovascular disease

Physiotherapy for heart health

World Health Organization: [Noncommunicable diseases](#)

World Health Organization: [Cardiovascular diseases \(CVDs\)](#). July 2025

World Health Organization: [Package of interventions for Rehabilitation, Module 4, Cardiopulmonary conditions](#)

World Heart Federation: [CVD Prevention | What We Do | World Heart Federation](#)

Poster 2: Stroke prevention

Almost all strokes can be prevented – physiotherapy plays an important role in reducing stroke risk

World Stroke Organization: [Prevent stroke](#)

Find out how your risk of stroke can be lowered - speak to a physiotherapist

World Stroke Organization: [Stroke and exercise](#)

Poster 3: Sit less and move more!

Start early. Stay active. Keep moving for life

Physical activity at any age improves health, independence, and quality of life

A physiotherapist can advise on how to exercise safely and reach recommended activity levels

WHO: [Physical activity](#)

Strain T, Flaxman S, Guthold R et al. [National, regional, and global trends in insufficient physical activity among adults from 2000 to 2022: a pooled analysis of 507 population-based surveys with 5·7 million participants](#). *The Lancet Global Health*, 2024; 12, e1232-e1243. doi: 10.1016/S2214-109X(24)00150-5

Banner 1: Heart health

Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death globally

World Health Organization: [Cardiovascular diseases \(CVDs\)](#). 31 July 2025

Doing some physical activity is better than none

Start by doing small amounts, and gradually increase over time

A physiotherapist can improve your heart health by:

- **spotting warning signs and promote early action**
- **identifying people at higher risk**
- **providing safe, individualised exercise programmes**

Physiotherapy can help everyone stay active and enjoy a better quality of life

World Health Organization: [Package of interventions for Rehabilitation, Module 4, Cardiopulmonary conditions](#)

American Heart Association: [Lifestyle Changes to Prevent a Heart Attack](#)

British Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation (BACPR): [Standards and Core Components for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Rehabilitation 2023](#)

European Society of Cardiology: [ESC Clinical Practice Guidelines on Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Clinical Practice: What Patients Need to Know](#)

World Heart Federation: [CVD Prevention | What We Do | World Heart Federation](#)

Banner 2: Stroke prevention

Just 30 minutes of exercise five times a week can reduce your risk of stroke by 25%

World Stroke Organization: [Stroke and exercise](#)

Physiotherapists play an important role in reducing stroke risk by helping you to:

- **manage long-term health conditions**
- **be more physically active**
- **make everyday lifestyle changes**

World Health Organization: [Stroke](#). December 2025

World Stroke Organization: [Stroke and exercise](#)

World Health Organization resources

World Health Organization: [Noncommunicable diseases](#)

World Health Organization: [Stroke](#). December 2025

World Health Organization: [Cardiovascular diseases \(CVDs\)](#). July 2025

World Health Organization: [Package of interventions for Rehabilitation, Module 4, Cardiopulmonary conditions](#)

See the advocacy toolkit for further resources and information.
