

# Bowls

*A guide for people  
with heart conditions*



**ACPICR**

Association of Chartered Physiotherapists  
In Cardiovascular Rehabilitation

Bowls is a popular sport and includes lawn bowls, indoor bowls and tenpin bowling.

## What are the specific benefits?

- Sociable and fun
- Can help improve your balance and strength
- Improves your confidence and well-being
- Most people, of all ages and abilities, can take part in bowls.



## When could I start?

It is very important to attend a cardiac rehabilitation programme and tell the team of your wish to return to or start bowls as they may be able to tailor your cardiac rehab exercise to practice the appropriate skills.

When you start depends upon your current level of physical fitness as well as your general health. It may be fairly soon after a stent or heart attack.

After cardiac surgery, the breast bone (sternum) needs to be allowed to heal so your bowling may need to wait a few weeks. Your cardiac exercise professional will advise you when they think you are ready.

## How can I get started?

It is a good idea to practice some of the physical movements which are often done when playing bowls such as lunging and bending down.

Perhaps start practicing with lighter and smaller balls. See how your muscles feel after playing with these before moving onto the bigger heavier balls again.

As with any activity, start low and go slow, build up gradually and pace yourself.

Take out some of the pressure and expectation of a bowls match by attending a social session or an open day.



## What about warm up and cool down?

The first 5 - 15 minutes and last 5 - 10 minutes of any exercise/activity should be performed at a lower intensity and pace. This allows your joints and muscle to loosen up and allows your heart rate and blood pressure to increase a bit too.

A gentle walk and some bending and lunging movements may be the best way to prepare. Consider walking to or from the green or park further away and walk.

The length of the warm up and cool down will be dependent on the length of the session as well as the overall intensity.

*Stop exercising if you experience any chest pain, palpitations, dizziness or light-headedness. If the symptoms do not go away promptly with rest and/or GTN spray/tablets seek medical advice as soon as possible.*

## How should I feel?

Listen to your body and think about how it compares with how you feel in the cardiac rehabilitation programme.

When you are doing exercise it is normal to feel:

- Slightly sweaty
- Warm or slightly flushed
- Your breathing is deeper and faster, but you can still talk
- Your heart beating faster

It is fine to feel that you are exerting yourself so long as you are not struggling.

If you need to take a break try and keep your feet moving by walking on the spot or tapping your feet if sat down.

Working hard then suddenly stopping may cause dizziness.

If you feel extremely tired following exercise you may have worked too hard, for too long. Think about reducing the amount of time you are bowling for or try bowling alternate ends. Also think about what other activities you have done that day and perhaps bowl on a less busy day of your week.



## Other things to consider

- If you have problems with your joints or mobility then look into disability bowls clubs. These associations have adapted games and can advise on equipment such as ball grabbers and releasers.
- Exercise only when feeling well.
- Don't exercise straight after eating a large meal.
- Remember to take a bottle of water.
- Watch out for the gutter!



Stop exercising if you experience any chest discomfort, palpitations, dizziness or light-headedness. If the symptoms do not go away promptly with rest and/ or your GTN spray/tablets, seek medical advice as soon as possible.

This guidance is based on available evidence and expert opinion.

Produced by the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Cardiovascular Rehabilitation

This leaflet is not intended to replace the advice that your doctor or cardiovascular rehabilitation team give you based on their expert knowledge of your condition.

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