

## **Improve Heart Health With Physical Therapy**

*By Northern Rehab Physical Therapy Specialists*

Heart disease is a leading cause of death and disability and has been at the top of the list for years; even COVID-19 hasn't knocked heart disease off the top of the list. We know that taking care of your heart is important. When it comes to heart health, most people think about things such as eating right, avoiding smoking, and exercising regularly. What most people don't think about is calling their physical therapist.

### **How Physical Therapy Can Improve Your Heart Health**

If you're regularly active, such as going for a run or swimming laps, you may not need help from your physical therapist. But 3 out of 4 adults aren't exercising regularly. For those folks, a physical therapist may be just the person they need. It's not uncommon for people to become more active on their own, then aggravate pain or an old injury somewhere such as their back, hip, shoulder, knee or ankle, then never get back to their old routine. A physical therapist will help evaluate old injury, new or re-occurring pain and design a specialized treatment plan to help you return to regular activity safely and reach your goals.

Cardiovascular exercise is any vigorous exercise that increases your heart rate, such as walking, running, dancing, biking, swimming or hiking. It strengthens your heart and blood vessels. It can help control weight, lower blood pressure, reduce stress, and prevent heart disease. Physical therapists play a role in your heart health.

Physical therapists can help to safely increase activity levels after a major medical issue such as a heart attack, stroke, post COVID syndrome, or even cancer. Recent research has shown improvements in cardiovascular fitness, fatigue levels and even pain in cancer patients who participate in a personalized physical fitness plan from a physical therapist.

Whatever barriers to physical activity exist, a physical therapist can help overcome them. As movement experts, physical therapists are trained to deal with a variety of conditions and are the most qualified professionals to help you feel and move better, including working with you on your specific issues to safely elevate your heart rate and protect against cardiovascular disease.

If you would like to improve your cardiovascular health or experiencing musculoskeletal or joint pain, contact your physical therapist. PTs are the most qualified professionals to help you move better and allow you to stay healthy and return to higher-quality lives.