

Rafael S. Garcia-Cortes, MD, MPHS

Cardiologist, Heart Failure and Transplant Specialist

Ascension Medical Group | St. Vincent Hospital

<https://healthcare.ascension.org/doctors/1013145986/rafael-s-garcia-cortes-indianapolis-in>

Title: 20 Minute Holiday Workout Routine

Goal: We're celebrating 20 years of healing hearts at Ascension St. Vincent Heart Center this month and sharing this 20 minute workout so everyone can keep their hearts strong and healthy this season.

Background:

Last winter, we discussed how to stay active and exercise outside in the cold during the winter (1). As a summary, we discussed it was safe and good for your heart, as long as you prepared adequately. First, we recommend dressing up in layers, covering up your most vulnerable areas such as fingers, ears, and head, while keeping your core and legs warm with warmer clothes. In addition, we touched on staying ahead of the cold by warming up while you are inside; therefore, increasing your muscles' heat and giving you an extra advantage during winter.

Always remember (WARNING): Before engaging in any exercise activity, consult with your physician or healthcare provider whether or not this is safe for you and your heart. Also, make sure conditions outside are safe and choose a path that is not icy, snowy, or slippery, while ALWAYS dressing accordingly.

Introduction:

Before starting to dig into our tailored holiday 20 mins workout, I would like to give you a roadmap of where we are heading. First, we will start by doing 5 minutes of a proper warm-up, while inside, to keep your muscles warm and ready for the moderate aerobic workout we are about to start. This will be very simple, anywhere from 30 to 60 seconds of each of five exercises that you can do at home, without ANY equipment, and you can even repeat twice until you feel ready to start your workout outside.

After this warm-up, I will recommend 15-25 minutes of moderate aerobic activity, which may include fast walking, jogging, a combination of walking and jogging, or running. Are you guys ready to start? Let's do it!

Warm-up (5-10 mins):

We will start by doing good dynamic stretches, while staying inside, once again, taking advantage in order to loosen up your muscles and adding some extra heat to them. Remember, think about your muscles as your personal rubber bands connecting all your bones and joints. As any rubber band, while cold, they are stiff and hard to stretch; however, when warmer, they are more elastic and easier to stretch out, which helps us achieve a better exercise capacity and endurance.

• **Warm-up circuit (5 short and easy exercises without equipment):**

1. We will start by putting work on core activation. Start by putting both hands and knees on the floor and taking deep breaths in and out, while arching your back and curving it. During each of these sequences, we are simulating the cat/cow pose you might be familiar doing during yoga routines. **Do this for 60 seconds.**

2. Next, stand up. I want you to do 60 seconds of marching in one place while moving your opposite elbows in 90-degree angles up and down (abdomen to shoulder height). Try to raise your knees up to your hips. Alternate legs with elbows. Your breathing should feel a bit heavier but you could probably do this for a long period of time without being overly tired. Don't worry, we are only here for **1 minute**.

3. Now we are going to work on activating your core and lower extremities by doing easy, modified versions of squats. If you are familiar with this exercise and feel strong enough to do a full repetition: feel free to do so. If not, you can go down as easy as your knees and hips allow you (even if just 20-45 degrees – NOTE: have PT her show modified vs full versions). First, keep your back straight and lower your body/hips to as close as you can to your knees while keeping your back safely straight. This is called a squat. Think about **8 to 10 repetitions in 60 seconds**, so no need to go too fast or jeopardize your form.

4. Following, we are going to work on activating your core, upper extremities, and lower extremities, all at once. For this, I want you to go down on the floor again. Place both hands and knees and we will work on what trainer's call "The World's Greatest Stretch" (yeah, I know, that is the coolest name for any stretch I have ever heard of). Now, the reason they call it "The World's Greatest Stretch" is because it provides a phenomenal all-around stretch to all of your muscles, including your front, back, core, and extremities. Refer to (2). (Here, we need PT to be aware of how to do the full technique while I go over it). First, you will put both hands and knees on the floor. Next, keep your left knee on the ground and place your opposite right foot next to your right hand (outside of it). Once your right knee is in place, raise your left knee from the floor and keep your left hand on the ground. Following, move your right elbow inside your right foot, and rest it on the floor, as close as you can from your left hand. Lastly, move your right hand outside your right foot, while twisting to reach for the ceiling. We can keep this position reaching the ceiling for 10-15 seconds. Then, reverse your stand and stretch out again the opposite side. You can **repeat this on each side 2-4 times for a total of 60-90 secs**, depending on how you feel. This is a very good exercise to warm up and stretch all of your muscles.

5. To finish your workout and get your HR up, up, up, I want you to stand on your feet and do a standard jumping jacks routine. Depending on how you feel in terms of warmth, I want you to at least do 15 of these in **1 minute**, although if you're able to do around 10 to 15 that would be great too.

After this warm-up routine, your muscles should be loosened and hot enough. In total, you should have spent anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes. If you feel like you're ready, go ahead and proceed to the next stage. If not, feel free to repeat the whole circuit again prior to starting our aerobic, moderate activity.

Aerobic, moderate intensity winter workout (15-25 mins):

For this, you can choose here between walking fast, alternating between walking and jogging, jogging, or running all the way, depending on your stamina and level of conditioning.

1. **Speed walking:** This will be the least strenuous of all modalities, but it will also give you the longest amount of time of exposure to the cold elements without getting overly heated by your exercise. Therefore, if you choose to do speed walking, make sure you feel very ready and heated after our “Warm-Up routine” above and consider adding extra layers, including gloves, hats, and even hand warmers to protect yourself out there. Here, you will be able to complete close to $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 mile in 20 minutes, as long as you’re walking at a speed fast enough that you cannot keep a conversation on the phone. Once again, 15-25 minutes is a suggestion. If you can complete 1 mile in less or more, just tailor it to your needs.

2. **Walk and jog:** Some people like to integrate a little bit of jogging in between their walking. I would recommend 1:1 intervals where we do 60 seconds of walking followed by 60 seconds of jogging (60 seconds each, alternating, therefore 1:1 routine). This should give you a slighter advantage in terms of heat, but you will still be closer to anywhere from 14 to 20 minutes to complete 1 mile. Regardless of whether you choose to do walking or walking and jogging, I want you to budget 20 minutes, so you should finish here anywhere between 1-1.4 miles of Distance.

3. **Jogging:** The name says it by itself, it’s faster than walking, but not quite running at full speed. On a scale of 1 to 10, this will be closer to a 3-5 out of 10. You will be hotter and generate more heat. As a result, make sure you dress up in layers, so you can remove the outer layer if you’re getting too hot or put it back if it’s too cold. 20 minutes should be perfect and you should be closer to 1.2 to 1.5 miles in 20 minutes.

4. **Running:** This is for my more physically apt and by far the most heat generating activity you can do of these four. People often refer to an intensity of 5-8 out of 10 when they run. You could choose to do something faster such as sprinting, but I would just recommend at the beginning, sticking with moderate intensity running. In addition, you don’t need to maintain a full run for the whole 20 minutes. It is OK to mix all of the above and jog in between even if you think it’s needed: just listen to your body. Here, you should be able to easily complete 1.4-2 miles in 20 minutes; depending on your Speed.

As a whole, this is just an introduction on how to warm up and do a quick 30 mins complete holiday work out outside (with an indoors warm-up) during the cold winter months. The hope is to help you to stay healthy and contribute to your cardiovascular health. Of course, you can stretch this routine into 20, 30, and even 45-60 mins of activity once you continue to progress in your journey. In addition, you can always do 20 mins total if you are running short on time or you do not feel strong enough yet to complete a full 30 mins. Finally, there are thousands of exercise routines out there that you can do to integrate into today’s routine and you can search online to specific websites that specialize in other warming-up techniques. However, for now, we will leave you with this sample, so you can continue to maximize your cardiovascular health this holiday season!

Thank you for having us here.

References:

1. <https://www.wishtv.com/news/medical/ascension-st-vincent-cardiologist-provides-advice-for-exercising-in-the-cold/?fbclid=IwAR0AWLwe9Ryl3uJueFxBQJJrRY6QWZRaj87iPOFkX1EMezSRtIPWlpcDbk>
2. <https://www.mensjournal.com/health-fitness/how-do-worlds-greatest-stretch/step-1/>