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STARTING AN EXERCISE PROGRAM

This handout is available for download at www.exerciseismedicine.org/physicians.htm.

Starting an exercise program can sound like a daunting task, but just remember that your main goal is to boost your health by meeting the basic physical activity recommendations: 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity at least five days per week, or vigorous-intensity activity at least three days per week, and strength training at least twice per week.

Guidelines for healthy adults under age 65 with no apparent chronic disease or condition

STEP 1 - Set aside time each day to exercise. Getting started can often be the most difficult part of any exercise routine. Scheduling exercise into your day and making it a priority will increase the chance of being successful.

STEP 2 - Choose cardiovascular activities you enjoy, such as swimming, biking, or playing basketball with friends to get your daily physical activity. If you need a variety of activities to stay motivated, combine a few that appeal to you. Physical activity can be accumulated through a variety of activities, not just running. **Walking** is a great way to do moderate-intensity physical activity. Moderate-intensity physical activity means working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat, yet still being able to carry on a conversation.

STEP 3 - Start with 10 to 15 minutes of cardiovascular exercise daily. Each week, add five minutes to your exercise routine **until you reach 30 minutes of moderate-intensity for a minimum of five days per week.** Alternately, you may do 20 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise three days per week. The 30-minute recommendation is for the average healthy adult to maintain health and reduce the risk for chronic disease. It should be noted that to lose weight or maintain weight loss, 60 to 90 minutes of physical activity may be necessary.

STEP 4 - Incorporate strength training into your routine. Do eight to 10 strength-training exercises, eight to 12 repetitions of each exercise twice a week. This can be accomplished by using dumbbells, resistance bands or your own body weight. If you are unsure how to perform the exercises correctly, seek the advice of an exercise professional.

Guidelines for adults over age 65 (or adults 50-64 with chronic conditions, such as arthritis)*

STEP 1 – Begin by following the four steps listed above. Both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity is critical for healthy aging.

STEP 2 - If you are at risk of falling, perform balance exercises. If you are unsure how to perform the exercises correctly, seek the advice of an exercise professional.

STEP 3 - Have a physical activity plan. Older adults or adults with chronic conditions should develop an activity plan with a health professional to manage risks and take therapeutic needs into account. This will maximize the benefits of physical activity and ensure your safety.

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

For more information, visit www.exerciseismedicine.org.

*If your physician has not cleared you for independent physical activity, you should exercise only under the supervision of a certified professional. The American College of Sports Medicine has two groups of certified fitness professionals that could meet your needs. The ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Specialist (CES) is certified to support those with heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. The ACSM Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RCEP) is qualified to support patients with a wide range of health challenges. You may locate all ACSM-certified fitness professionals by using the ProFinder at www.acsm.org.