

Being Active for a Healthy Weight

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Do you want to feel better, move better and sleep better? Inactive people who start moving get the biggest bang for their buck. Experts now say that any physical activity counts toward better health — even just a few minutes!

If you are overweight, you may find certain things difficult to do and get out of breath easily. You are also at greater risk for health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, knee arthritis and some types of cancer. You can turn that around with regular physical activity, improve your stamina and help with weight loss. *Most importantly, being active is essential to keeping weight off once you've lost it.* Even if you don't lose weight, being more active decreases your risk of diabetes or heart problems — and you'll just feel good.

If fat loss is your goal, you'll need to eat less, be more active or a combination of both — the best plan. Daily aerobic activity is key to burning more calories. Strength training helps too. Each person is different so the exact same plan won't work for everyone.

Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.

Getting Started

Start Simple

Sit less and move around more! Walk to the mailbox. Walk the dog. Dance in the kitchen. Take the stairs. Never sit for more than 2 hours. Find opportunities to move throughout your day — it's "activity snacking," and it all adds up.



Build a Plan

Would you prefer being active at home, in your neighborhood or at a fitness facility? Is there a better time of day? Would you do better in a supervised program? What's fun for you? Schedule activity into your calendar — it's important!



Check Your Health

If you have questions about muscle aches, joint problems or health issues, talk with your health care provider. Would physical therapy help? Will any medications you're taking affect your body's response to exercise?



Be Active with a Friend

Being active with others can help you stick with it. Find an exercise buddy and meet regularly doing something you both enjoy. Join an activity club or online recreation group.



Other Tips if You Carry Extra Weight

If you are concerned about being too out of shape or get tired easily, start with just a few minutes of activity. How about 10-15 minutes in the morning and evening? Gradually increase active time as your body adapts.

Sometimes we eat to deal with stress or other emotions. Get help from a counselor who can teach you how to deal with your feelings in a healthier way.

If you are limited by knee or back pain (or other injuries), ask your health care provider for a referral to physical therapy. Try non-weight bearing activities such as chair aerobics, exercise in a pool or stationary biking.

Studies show that combining daily physical activity, a lower calorie diet and behavioral therapy can help you stick with your plan and be successful. Ask for a referral to these professionals for support and guidance.

Set small goals. For example, "I will add 10 more minutes of walking each day this week." Improving fitness or losing weight takes time. Develop a healthy lifestyle and you'll get there!

Aerobic Activity



Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing to burn calories. Your first goal is to build up to doing 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity (like a brisk walk, light cycling, water exercise or dancing). To get long-term results, gradually build up to at least 250 active minutes per week. This may also include vigorous activity (like step aerobics, swimming or hiking hills).

What?

Any rhythmic, continuous activity



How often?

5 or more days/week



How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard



How much?

Start w/10 minutes. Gradually build up to 30-60 total minutes.



Remember: Fit in 5 or 10 minutes here and there. Or go for 20-30 minutes. Be active however and wherever you can. It all adds up to improved fitness! For weight loss, gradually increase aerobic activity with a goal of 60 minutes/day.

Aerobic Activity Tips

- Listen to your body. Start low and go slow. Do a little more each time.
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise.
- Exercise in water takes stress off your joints and can just feel good – give it a try!

Interval training can increase your fitness level and burn more calories. For example, after warming up, walk 1 block very briskly (pumping your arms) and then 2 blocks at your normal speed. Or ride the exercise bike hard for 1 minute followed by 1 minute at a recovery pace. Repeat 4 times. Build up to 10 repeats.

Strength Training



Resistance training improves strength and overall health. You'll be able to do fun and daily activities easier and safer.

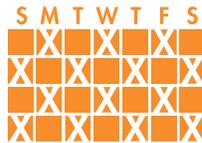
What?

Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines or your own body (for example, wall push-ups or chair sit-to-stands)



How often?

2-3 days/week
*Rest day in between



How hard?

Start with light effort. Build up to medium or hard effort.



How much?

8-12 repetitions (for each major muscle group) Repeat 2-4 times.



Remember: Get help from a certified exercise professional. They can teach you the right way to do exercises and how to breathe properly.

Strength Training Tips

- Avoid straining or holding your breath when lifting.
- Circuit weight training has been shown to help with weight loss, providing both strength and aerobic benefits. Give it a try!

Other Ideas for Physical Activity and Health



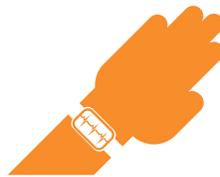
Be Food Smart

Choose foods lower in calories, fat and added sugar to help you lose weight (1-2 lbs/week). Eat fresh fruits, veggies, whole grain foods, low fat dairy and lean protein. The Mediterranean diet has proven to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.



Take More Steps

Use a smart phone or activity tracker. Count your steps each day for the first few weeks. Slowly build to 2,000 more daily steps than you're doing now. Good job! Then aim for 7,000-9,000 steps/day.



Just for Fun

Find ways of being active that are just plain fun. Try pickleball or ping pong. Dance. Tend your garden. Play outdoors with your kids or grandkids. Find what makes you smile and do it often.



Flexibility

Stretch your muscles 2-3 days/week to the point of feeling tightness. Hold for 10-30 seconds (30-60 seconds for older adults). For example, stretch your calves or the back of your thighs. Try yoga, or tai chi.



Get More Help

Have you been told that you have prediabetes? Ask for a referral to the [Diabetes Prevention Program](#) to help you form healthy habits (it may be reimbursed by Medicare, your insurance or employer).

Go to [acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro](https://www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro) to find an **ACSM certified exercise professional** near you.

How will I get started **this week?** _____