



My Road to Better Health

Move Daily

Keys to better health

You can reduce your risk of health problems if you:

- Get regular exercise.
- Choose healthy foods.
- Stay at a healthy weight.
- Do not smoke or use other kinds of tobacco.

Why exercise matters

Regular physical activity:

- Improves fitness, flexibility, balance, strength, and bone and heart health.
- Boosts energy and mood.
- Helps with weight control.
- Helps prevent or control diabetes, osteoporosis, heart disease, and high blood pressure.

Types of exercise

An exercise plan should include:

- **Cardiovascular activities.** These activities raise your heart and breathing rates for an extended time. Cardiovascular activities can increase your fitness and stamina, help with weight control and improve your overall health.
 - Goal: 150 minutes of medium-intensity exercise each week.
 - Examples: Walking, biking, skiing, tennis, dancing, swimming, and yard work.
- **Strengthening exercises.** These exercises strengthen your muscles and bones and can help with weight control.
 - Goal: Two or three 15- to 30- minute sessions each week.
 - Examples: Stretches using elastic bands, lifting weights, and doing push-ups, abdominal crunches or leg squats.
- **Flexibility exercises.** Also called stretches, these exercises increase your range of motion, make your muscles more limber and may help prevent injury.
 - Examples: Gentle stretches, yoga, tai chi, Pilates.
- **Balance movements.** These movements help you keep your balance and improve your posture, and they may help you reduce your risk of falls and injury.
 - Examples: Yoga, tai chi, single-leg balances.

Getting started

“Starting” can be the hardest step to take. These tips may help.

- **Talk to your primary health care provider before you begin an exercise program.** This is especially true if you have a long-term medical condition.
- **Plan for exercise.** Put specific times on your calendar for physical activity. Try 30-minute sessions 5 days a week or 60-minute sessions 3 days a week.
- **Choose activities you enjoy.** When you do this, you’re more likely to stick with the plan.
- **Find new ways to exercise.** You don’t have to go to a gym. All movement counts, including everyday activities like walking, climbing stairs and doing housework. The important thing is to move daily.
- **Make exercise a habit.** Follow your plan for at least 30 days. It takes about this long to train the brain to make this a healthy habit for life.

Staying on course

These ideas can help you move more each day.

- **Limit daily screen time to two hours or less.** Most people are not active and tend to eat without thinking while they watch TV or use a computer.
- **Start slowly.** Begin with small, realistic goals and slowly increase your time and level of effort.
- **Get on your feet.** Take regular breaks during the day to stand up and move. Walk to work or school. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Try a walking meeting.
- **Be creative.** Have exercise contests with friends. March in place or walk some stairs when talking on the phone. Walk virtual trails on a treadmill. Wash your car yourself.
- **Use a pedometer.** A pedometer counts the number of steps you take. It can help you track how much activity you get each day. Record the number of steps you take for several days to find your daily average. Then try to add 2,000 steps a day each week until you average 10,000 to 15,000 steps daily. A mile is about 2,000 steps.

Moving past obstacles

These suggestions may help you overcome barriers to exercise.

- **Be flexible.** If 30 minutes is hard to schedule, try shorter sessions, like 10 minutes 3 times a day.
- **Be aware of pain.** You may be a bit sore or stiff when you start to exercise or exercise more, but you should not have pain. “No pain, no gain” is the wrong motto. Instead, remember “Start low and go slow.”
- **“Lift smart.”** Focus on the number of times you lift a weight rather than the pounds you lift. For example, lifting a lighter weight 10 to 20 times can be safer and give you greater benefits than straining to raise a heavy weight just a few times.
- **Add variety to prevent boredom and injury.** For example, switch between walking and swimming for your cardiovascular exercise.
- **Track your progress.** Record your pedometer readings and physical activities daily in an exercise log or on a computer program. This can motivate you to follow your plan. And it may challenge you to move more!

Take **S M A R T** steps for better health

Specific	What am I going to do?
Measurable	How will I track my progress?
Achievable	What steps will I take to make this happen?
Relevant	Is this important enough to me to want to do it?
Time-framed	When will I do this?

Of the choices listed on the other pages, what are the first steps you are willing to take in the next few days?

Rate your confidence

How much do you believe you can do this? Circle your answer here.

Not at all confident							Extremely confident			
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

If you rate your confidence below a 7, consider changing your plan.

This material is for your education and information only. This content does not replace medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. New medical research may change this information. If you have questions about a medical condition, always talk with your health care provider.