



It's Time to Get Moving!

Being physically active is important for overall wellness. About 80 percent of adults don't get enough activity to maintain good health.

Regular physical activity can help you:

- lower your risk of heart disease and stroke.
- maintain a healthy weight.
- reduce or control blood pressure.
- raise HDL ("good") cholesterol.
- reduce your risk of diabetes and some kinds of cancer.
- sleep better.
- have more energy to do the things you love.

Physical activity is anything that makes you move your body and burn calories! This includes things like climbing stairs, gardening, housework, shoveling snow, walking the dog, playing sports and dancing, as well as traditional aerobic activities like walking, running, swimming and biking. Strengthening and stretching exercises are also good for overall stamina and flexibility.

The simplest change you can make to improve your heart health is to start walking. It's fun, free, easy, social and great exercise. A walking program is flexible and can be done just about anywhere. It's easy to make walking a regular and satisfying part of your life.

Moderate activity means your heart is beating faster and you're starting to sweat. You can carry on a conversation, but you'll be breathing heavier.

Vigorous activity feels more taxing. Your heart is beating much faster. You can carry on a conversation, but will find yourself pausing to take a breath.

How Much is Enough?

Most adults should get:

- at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity at least 5 days per week for a total of 150 minutes per week, OR
- at least 25 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity at least 3 days per week for a total of 75 minutes per week, OR
- a combination of moderate and vigorous activity, AND
- moderate- to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity at least 2 days per week for additional health benefits.

If you need to lower blood pressure or cholesterol, aim for an average of 40 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity 3 or 4 times per week.

Kids should get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity every day.

Thirty minutes a day, five times a week (30X5) is an easy goal to remember. You'll benefit even if you divide your time into two or three sessions per day of 10 to 15 minutes each.

You may not be able to achieve this time goal right away. But remember, *something* is always better than nothing! And everyone has to start somewhere. Even if you've been sedentary for years, today is the day you can begin to make healthy changes in your life.

If you don't think you'll make it for 30 minutes, set a more reachable goal. You can work up toward your overall goal by increasing your time as you get stronger. Don't let all-or-nothing thinking keep you from doing what you can every day.

No More Excuses

People give many reasons for not making physical activity a priority. Do any of these sound familiar?

- **“I’m so busy. I just don’t have time!”** Many Americans live with a packed schedule. You can make your health a priority over life’s other demands. Even our nation’s president sets aside time to exercise! You don’t have to do your whole workout all at once. Get up 30 minutes earlier in the morning or set aside 15 minutes of your lunch break.
- **“I can’t afford a gym membership.”** Walking is free! If it’s cold or rainy, head to a shopping mall to walk. Look for a low-cost gym or city rec center. Buy some workout DVDs on sale or borrow them from the library. You can even download exercise podcasts.
- **“I got bored with my workout routine.”** Try something new! There are so many ways to be active. Try tennis with some friends, soccer or catch with your kids or even just switching from yoga to karate. Your body and mind will benefit from the change.
- **“I feel too tired after a workout.”** Chronic or extreme fatigue may signal a health problem, but if your healthcare provider clears you for exercise, you may just need to pace yourself better. Walk before trying to run. Make sure you’re getting enough sleep each night and eating healthy foods that fuel your body and give you energy.
- **“I don’t like exercising alone.”** Find a buddy! Introduce yourself to someone at the gym, join a team or a walking group, find a neighbor to walk with, or play with your kids. When you exercise with others, it’s easier to hold each other accountable – especially on those cold, rainy days!
- **“I’m too young” or “I’m too old.”** Neither excuse is true. When you’re in your 20s and 30s, it’s important to regulate your body’s metabolism, strengthen your heart and prevent future disease. When you’re older, exercise plays a vital role in keeping you healthy and strong. Several studies have shown how regular exercise improves quality of life during the aging process.

How to Get Started

- **Assess yourself.** Realistically, what can you do? Can you walk at a brisk pace for 20 minutes? Can you swim one lap? Can you touch your toes? Base your starting point on what you can do today. Try tracking your activity for a week. Use it as a place to start and build up to more as you are able.
- **Add on gradually.** Gradually increase your workouts by using intervals. For example, after every five minutes walking at your usual pace, try pushing yourself to walk for one minute at a faster pace. Before you know it, the faster pace will be your new normal.
- **Seek out credible resources.** Visit Heart.org/PhysicalActivity for free tips and tools. Books, videos, podcasts and other resources are also widely available.