

FITNESS BASICS



Physical activity can reduce your risk of chronic disease, improve your balance and coordination, and help you lose weight. It can even improve your sleeping habits and self-esteem.



START EXERCISING

You're motivated to get in shape. Now here's how to get started and stick with it.

- **Talk with your health care provider**, especially if you have been inactive, are overweight, are over 40 years old or have a chronic health problem.
- **Take it easy.** Gradually increase the length and the intensity of your workouts.
- **Stop if you feel pain.** Pain is your body's way of telling you something is wrong.
- **Choose activities you enjoy.** You're more likely to do them on a regular basis.
- **Stay with it.** While you enjoy immediate benefits, the most substantial gains come when you make exercise a regular part of your lifestyle.

Make the Most of Your Workouts

- **Warm up.** Start with light exercises. It may not feel like much, but it gives your muscles time to adjust to the demands of a heavier workout.
- **Stretch the session.** Sustained, moderate exercise provides more benefits than short, intense sessions.
- **Stay hydrated.** Thirst signals that you're becoming dehydrated. Drink water frequently during your workout, even if you're not thirsty.
- **Cool down afterward.** Close your workout with lighter exercises to help slow your heart rate. You'll be preparing your body for the next workout.



Work Out at Work

Fit in more physical activity while you're on the job:

- Take the **stairs** often.
- Make coffee breaks **fitness breaks**. Take a 15-minute walk.
- Start a lunchtime **walking group** with your co-workers.
- When **traveling** for work, plan to maintain your exercise routine. Pack your sports shoes or exercise bands, or choose a hotel that has fitness facilities.

Vary Your Activities

- **AEROBIC EXERCISE** is any moderate nonstop activity that gets your heart pumping and increases oxygen flow. **Try this:** Wake up 30 minutes earlier and take a brisk walk on your treadmill or around the neighborhood.
- **STRETCHING** helps prevent muscle strain and injury and improves range of motion in your joints. **Try this:** Hold stretches for at least 30 seconds or longer but not to the point of straining.
- **STRENGTH TRAINING** builds muscle mass; protects bones, ligaments and tendons; and helps improve physique. **Try this:** Lift and lower weights in slow, controlled motions. This isolates the muscles you want to work.

STICK WITH IT ... YOU CAN

- Don't miss 3 workouts in a row for the first 3 months. By achieving that, you're more likely to make exercise a habit.
- Be grown up. Don't let weather or other distractions become excuses to skip exercise.
- Work toward a reward such as new athletic shoes, a massage or a club membership. It can add to the fun.
- Be reasonable. Consider fitness a long-term project that starts small and builds gradually. Set weekly goals to help you stay on track.
- Deal with the details. Make exercise convenient and accessible.
- Think of the benefits while you're exercising.
- Make your routine a necessity, not a daily decision.