

# Being Active for a Better Life

Exercise  
is Medicine®

AMERICAN COLLEGE  
of SPORTS MEDICINE®

Inactive people who start moving get the biggest bang for their buck. Experts now say that any physical activity counts – even just a few minutes! Fit in 2, 5, 10 or 20 minutes throughout your day. Every active minute adds up to better health.

Did you know that not getting enough physical activity can result in the same kinds of health problems caused by smoking and being overweight? Moving more often:

- Improves your mood and sleep;
- Slows the effects of aging;
- Lowers your risk of heart problems, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes and many kinds of cancer;
- Helps maintain your immune system, which may help to lower risk of infection, lessen symptoms and speed recovery from various illnesses;
- Helps keep your mind sharp as you get older and lowers your risk of dementia and Alzheimer's;
- Increases your energy and simply makes life better!

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

## Getting Started

### Start Simple

Simply sit less and move around more. Walk to the mailbox. Walk the dog. Dance at your desk. Take the stairs. Find opportunities to move throughout the day.



### Be Active with a Friend

Do activities you enjoy and find a buddy at home or work. Those who exercise with a friend tend to stick with it longer than those who go it alone.



### Check Your Health

If you have health worries, talk with your health care provider before you start exercising. Muscle or joint problems? Ask about doing physical therapy before beginning an exercise program.



### Motivation

Use a smart phone or activity tracker to measure your progress and stay motivated. Count your steps daily for the first week or two. Gradually build up to 7,000-9,000 steps each day.



### To stay safe and injury free:

- Gradually increase your pace and time spent being active. Start low and go slow!
- Start with light to medium effort.
- Warm up and cool down (easy pace) before and after exercise.

# Aerobic Activity



Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing. Build up to doing at least 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity, 75 minutes/week of vigorous activity or a combination of both. You'll improve your stamina and heart health.

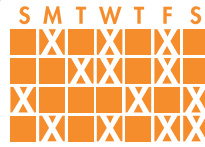
## What?

Any rhythmic, continuous activity!



## How often?

3-5 Days/week



## How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard



## How much?

Start w/a few minutes. Gradually build up to 30-60 minutes over the day.



**Remember:** Walking, biking, dancing, swimming and water exercise are great. Be active however and wherever you can – every minute counts. To lose weight, do twice as much activity.

# Strength Training



Strength training, for example working with weights or resistance bands, makes you stronger and helps your overall health. Plus, strength training can make daily activities like lifting laundry baskets or yardwork easier and safer.

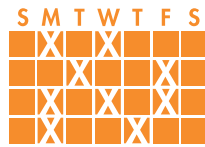
## What?

Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines, or your own body (for example, kitchen counter pushups or chair squats)



## 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?

10-15 repetitions to start (for each major muscle group) Build up to 8-12 reps of challenging effort. Repeat 2-4 times.



**Remember:** Avoid straining or holding your breath when lifting. If you need it, get help from a certified exercise professional. They can teach you the right way to do exercises and how to breathe properly.

# Other Types of Physical Activity

- Yoga, Tai Chi and Pilates help with balance, flexibility and strength, and are relaxing too!
- Flexibility: Stretch your muscles 2-7 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.
- Balance: Exercises may include standing on one foot, walking on a line, or using a balance board. Train in an uncluttered area and use a chair or wall for support if needed.

How will I get started **this week?** \_\_\_\_\_