

MAKING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY COUNT



Having energy is about feeling good. Fortunately, most of us already have all the energy we need, we just need to manage it better – and making just a few small changes to your level of activity can do the trick. Although it may feel intimidating at first, it all comes down to three simple steps: getting started, staying motivated and gradually progressing with your fitness routine.

What is considered physical activity?

Contrary to what you might think, physical activity isn't limited to potentially daunting exercises like going to the gym. In fact, According to the National Institute of Health, **physical activity is defined as any form of exercise or movement.**

Activities may include:

- › **Planned activities**, such as walking, running, strength training, basketball, or other sports.
- › **Daily activities**, such as household chores, yard work, walking the dog, etc.

Why is physical activity so important?

Exercise is very important to your health and weight management. Healthy and sustainable weight loss requires both a good diet and regular exercise. Exercise in particular has a stronger correlation with long-term weight maintenance than any other lifestyle factor. That means if you don't exercise regularly – and find some exercise activities that you can do for the rest of your life – you will have a very hard time maintaining a healthy weight over the long term.

In addition to boosting energy levels and promoting weight loss, making physical activity a regular part of your life can:

Decrease

- › Blood sugar levels
- › Triglycerides
- › LDL cholesterol
- › Blood pressure
- › Fat mass
- › Stress level
- › Risk for disease
- › Anxiety and depression

Increase

- › Metabolism
- › HDL cholesterol
- › Muscle mass
- › Overall health
- › Productivity and alertness
- › Insulin sensitivity
- › Ability to sleep at night
- › Self-esteem and mood

Getting started

- › Find something you enjoy doing
- › Make time
- › Don't wait

Always check with your physician first before starting an exercise program. If you haven't been physically active for a while, you want to start slowly to let your body get used to moving more, and to let it heal from the effects of a sedentary lifestyle.



Following the F.I.T.T. principle

The F.I.T.T. principle for cardiorespiratory training is a “prescription” for how often, how long, how hard and how to exercise. These general guidelines apply to people at all fitness levels.

Frequency: how often?

We recommend that you exercise on most days of the week. You may start at three if you are sedentary, but progress to **at least four times per week (preferably 5-6 times/week)**. It's also important to remember not to beat yourself up if you can't get four workouts in each week. Some weeks are busier than others. That's just the way things go. But try to do what you can to make exercise a priority.

Intensity: how hard?

Intensity-based training is important because it helps you work out at an appropriate level – helping your body burn unwanted fat, conserve muscle and maximize the amount of calories you burn during one session of activity. Working out at the right intensity will train your cardiorespiratory system to become stronger and more efficient, increasing the endurance and strength of your heart.

There are two main methods to measure your intensity while exercising:

Maximum heart rate (MHR)

- › $208 - (0.7 \times \text{Age})$
- › Aim to work out at a recommended range of 65%–85% of your maximum heart rate ($\text{MHR} \times 0.65$ and 0.85)

Rate of perceived exertion (RPE)

- › Be aware of how you're feeling
- › Ask yourself every 3–5 minutes “How much longer can I do this?”
- › Aim for a range of 5–8 on the RPE scale

Time: how long?

How long you exercise depends on your beginning activity level.



Starting out

- › Low-intensity cardio: 15 minutes, 3 days a week
- › About 60% of your maximum heart rate
- › Ramping up slowly will help your body gradually “heal” from the effects of a sedentary lifestyle

After one month

- › Increase time by 10% (2-3 minutes)/week
- › Increase time or distance before exercise intensity

Regular exercisers

- › Start at 30 minutes, slowly increasing the time
- › Goal = 40–60 minutes, most days of the week

Type: how?

There are so many ways to exercise. Some you'd expect like walking, running, strength training and sports. And others you might not have ever thought to be considered exercise like household chores, yard work and even walking the dog. Above all, the best type of exercise is:

- › Something that will keep your heart rate up
- › Something that you enjoy because if you don't enjoy it, you will not stay motivated to do it

Take the talk test

If you can talk easily, you need to “up” the pace. If you can only get three words in between each breath, perhaps slow down slightly.



How to measure intensity

Heart rate

There are two ways to measure your heart rate.

- 1 Use a heart rate monitor
 - Set to your low (65%) and high (85%) heart rate intensities
 - Heart rate monitors can be purchased at sporting goods stores or online
- 2 Check your pulse manually
 - Take your pulse in two areas:
 - At the carotid artery on your neck
 - At the radial artery on your wrist
 - Exercise pulse rate
 - Take immediately after exercising and keep moving around to avoid blood pooling in the legs



Rate of perceived exertion

Work out between intensities of 5 and 8

- 1 = Sitting in a chair
- 2 = Easy walk
- 3 = Warm-up for exercise
- 4 = Brisk walk
- 5 = Exerting, but I can do this for an hour
- 6 = Challenging myself and can only do this for another 30 minutes
- 7 = Working hard and can probably only go for another 15 minutes
- 8 = Breathing heavy through an open mouth and could do this for 5 more minutes
- 9 = Out of breath but could probably do this for another 30 seconds to 2 minutes
- 10 = I have to stop

Tips for staying motivated

- › Being a certain size and looking a certain way are strong motivators at first, but they're also more short-term
- › Find long-term motivation, as well
- › Personally meaningful reasons are more likely to keep you going
- › Choose an activity you like will help you stay with it over the long term



Overcoming barriers

Whether it's a lack of time, energy or interest, there are many "excuses" we make for ourselves to justify not working out. But if we put even half that same effort into finding ways to overcome those barriers, we'd all be working out for sure. Here are some simple solutions for doing just that.

"I don't have time."

- › Write workout time into your schedule and treat it like a meeting with your CEO.
- › Fill in the gaps
 - Move your body while dinner is cooking
 - Walk/run on the treadmill or turn on your favorite exercise video
 - Walk/run while you are waiting for the laundry to be ready
- › Wake up just 30 minutes earlier and get the blood flowing with an early morning routine
- › Put the alarm clock on the other side of the room to force yourself to get up out of bed





“Between kids and work, there’s just no time.”

- › Work out a child-care schedule with your neighbors
- › Play with your kids
- › Make use of your lunch break
- › Stretch at your desk
- › Park your car further away
- › Take the stairs
- › Have “walk and talk” meetings
- › Walk to someone’s desk to talk to them
- › Take a quick walk on your break



“I have so much to do.”

- › Walk/run the dog, so you both get good exercise
- › Make chores count – do them for at least 20 minutes and at a pace fast enough to get your heart pumping and calories burning
- › Ride a bike to the grocery store with a basket or walk with a backpack if you only need a few things

“I travel for work.”

- › Go to the hotel gym and then reward yourself with a dip in the pool
- › Exercise right in your room. Bring your own resistance bands or use your own body weight for resistance in squats, lunges or crunches

“I get bored.”

- › Set up a treadmill or stationary bike in front of the TV
- › Change up your routine – try tennis, dance, yoga or martial arts
- › Find a workout buddy or sign up for an exercise class
- › If outdoors, take a new route
- › Perform interval training
- › Check fitness clubs or sports stores for weekend excursions
- › Hire a personal trainer



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