



This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Only your doctor can diagnose and treat a medical problem.

***Be Active...
for a
Healthier You***

Be Active...for a

Think you don't need to worry about being physically active? Recent surveys have shown that 24% of Americans 18 years of age and older are not active enough. As a result, about 400,000 people in the United States die each year as a result of a lack of physical activity and poor diet.¹

Physical activity doesn't have to be hard work



Simply put, physical activity can be anything that gets you moving. You can be active without going to a gym, getting special exercise equipment, or hiring a sports trainer. Instead,

dancing, yardwork, and even just walking are all forms of activity that can improve your strength, muscles, bones, and coordination.² Physical activity can also help you lose weight and feel physically and mentally better.

Getting started on fitness

How much physical activity do you need? When you've been physically inactive and have to lose weight, starting a regular activity program can seem like a near-impossible goal. But your doctor can help you design a good program that's both fun and fits in with your daily activities.

References:

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Healthier You

Stick with the program!

Starting a program of physical activity* is easier than staying on it! Here's what fitness experts recommend:

- 1. Slow down.** Most beginners usually walk, run, or exercise too hard at first, and then quit after a few workouts because they don't like the pain. Sure, you should feel tired after physical activity, but later on you'll feel refreshed and energized.
- 2. Select activities that you enjoy and that fit into your daily schedule.** Try walking or some other type of physical activity before working or going to school. Or maybe you prefer evenings. There is no right or wrong time of day for physical activity. Whatever works best for you is fine.⁴
- 3. Find a partner.** Physical activity with someone else doubles the chance that you'll stick with it.⁶
- 4. Write up a contract.** Set realistic goals for yourself and write them down. Tell friends and family members about your contract so that they can encourage and support you.
- 5. Chart your progress.** Keep a diary of your physical activity and reward yourself when you meet specific goals, such as pedaling that extra mile or walking for a full hour. Go to a movie or buy yourself something. You've earned it!

To help you get started, the American Diabetes Association says that your healthcare provider may need to check out your level of fitness to find out what kinds of physical activities will be most helpful to you.³ You should review those activity choices, decide on the ones you think you can do, and include those in your daily life. It even helps to write down your promise — including what you will do, when, how often, and for how long.³ (Your provider or health plan can give you a “Diabetes Therapy Adherence Contract” to help put your promise in writing.)

Also, remember that physical activity may cause a change in your body's glucose (blood sugar) level. So work with your healthcare provider to make sure you know how to check your glucose levels before and after physical activity, what to look for, and what to do in case your glucose rises or falls too much.³

Get off that couch!

To avoid the major risks for developing heart disease and type 2 diabetes, you don't have to run a marathon! Regular physical activity starts with setting goals you know you can achieve. By following some of the simple suggestions below, you can increase your physical activity and your long-term health:

- ▶ Use the steps, not elevators or escalators
- ▶ Take the dog for a walk

*Consult your doctor before beginning any physical activity.



- ▶ Spend less time watching television or playing video games
- ▶ Try gardening
- ▶ Get off the bus one stop before your usual stop and walk the extra distance to wherever you are going

And what can make regular physical activity even easier for you, is that it doesn't have to be done all at one time. In fact, it's okay to spread it out over the course of the whole day.⁴

- ▶ At first, start your physical activity slowly for 30 minutes, 3 days a week*
- ▶ Then build to 45 minutes of physical activity at least 5 days a week*
- ▶ All told, a total of about 30 to 45 minutes of physical activity each day — in any combination of walking, gardening, climbing stairs, or even playing with the kids — will burn off 100 to 200 calories a day

**Consult your doctor before beginning any physical activity.*

In addition, don't worry about how hard you should be working out. Light-to-moderate levels of physical activity are an excellent start.⁴ What really matters is to make it a regular part of your day. The more you move around, the more energy you'll begin to have.

What can you expect?

Nothing at first. But the payoff — a reduced risk of heart attack and type 2 diabetes — should come if you keep at it. In fact, studies have shown that losing just 5% to 7% of your body weight through increased physical activity and cutting down on calories and fat can often prevent or delay your chance of getting diabetes.⁵ Over time, you may slim down, but it's important to remember that losing weight happens slowly and **not** to stop.

Knowledge is power, so learn to live.

For more information, visit www.MyPyramid.gov on the Internet, or call **1-800-AHA-USA1**

to order a free copy of the "2006 American Heart Association Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations" brochure. Both are great sources of information on how physical activity and a proper diet can help keep you healthy.

