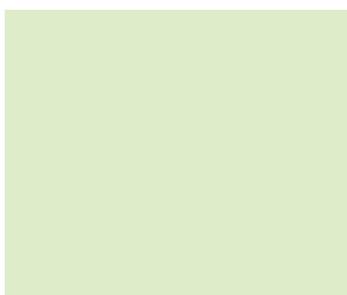
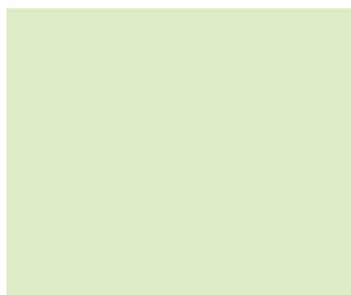
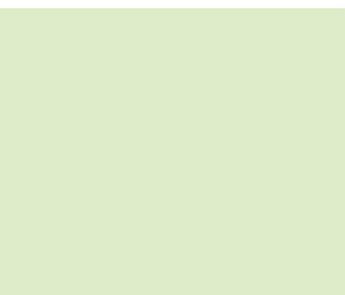


Tips to Help You Get Active



National Institute of
Diabetes and Digestive
and Kidney Diseases

WIN Weight-control
Information Network

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Introduction

You know that physical activity is good for you. Regular physical activity may help prevent or delay many health problems. Being active may help you look and feel better, both now and in the future.

So what's stopping you? Maybe you think that working out is boring, joining a gym is costly, or fitting one more thing into your busy day is impossible.

This brochure will help you identify and beat your roadblocks to physical activity. It will give you tips and help you create a plan to get moving or add more activity to your life.

Why should I be physically active?

Regular physical activity may improve your health in many ways (see “Benefits of Regular Physical Activity” box). Research shows that people who are overweight, active, and fit live longer than people who are not overweight but are inactive and unfit.

Benefits of Regular Physical Activity

Regular physical activity may help you

- control your weight
- improve your mood
- prevent weight-related health problems, like high blood pressure and diabetes

For more, see the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, listed in the Resources section of this brochure.

What is aerobic activity?

Aerobic activity makes your heart beat faster and may cause you to breathe harder. You should be able to speak several words in a row while doing aerobic activities, but you should not be able to have a long chat.

Here are a few examples:

- biking
- dancing
- sports (basketball, football, soccer)
- walking fast
- water aerobics



Being more active may help you control your weight by balancing the number of calories you burn with the number of calories you eat. Regular physical activity may also help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and stroke. If you have one of these health problems, physical activity may improve your condition.

Regular physical activity may also improve your quality of life right now. Become more active and enjoy the benefits of a healthier lifestyle, like a happier mood, more energy, and a stronger body.

How much physical activity do I need?

If you are a healthy adult, U.S.

Government guidelines advise that you do these activities on a regular basis:

- **aerobic activities**, like walking fast, jogging, or dancing (see “What is aerobic activity?” box). Aim for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. To get more benefits, lose weight, or keep off weight you have lost, you may need more. Aim for 60 to 90 minutes per day. Try to be active for at least 10 minutes at a time without any breaks.

- **strengthening activities**, or activities that make you push or pull against something (for example, lifting weights, doing sit-ups, using exercise bands). Aim for at least 2 days a week.

If you have a health problem like heart disease, high blood pressure, or diabetes, ask your doctor about the types and amounts of physical activity that are right for you. In most cases, you do not need to talk to your provider before starting an activity like walking.

Recent studies suggest that sitting down for long periods of time may lead to health problems, like diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. This was found even among people who are active at other times of the day. If you must spend a lot of time sitting down, take breaks to stand up and move around every 30 minutes, if possible.

How can I start to be active?

Pick an activity you enjoy. If you do not like the exercise you are doing, it is hard to keep it up. List the activities you would like to do, like walking, joining a sports league, exercising with a video, dancing, biking, or taking a class at a fitness or community center. If you are already active, what types of activity can you add? Select an activity that sounds like fun and try it out.

Start slow and add a little at a time. If you are not active now, the idea of doing 30 to 60 minutes of activity each day may seem like too much at first. Start by being active 10 minutes on 5 days each week. Every few weeks, add 5 to 10 minutes until you are getting at least 30 minutes of activity most days.

Set a goal, make a plan, and add it to your calendar.

- Set short-term goals that are specific and that you can track. For example, instead of saying “I’m going to be more active this week,” set a goal of walking 30 minutes a day, 3 days a week.
- Think of the days and times you could do the activity, such as first thing in the morning, during lunch break from work, after dinner, or on Saturday afternoon. Look at your calendar or planner to find the days and times that work best, and commit to those plans. Use the chart below to create your plan.

	What will I do?	When will I do it?	How long will I do it?
Monday			mins.
Tuesday			mins.
Wednesday			mins.
Thursday			mins.
Friday			mins.
Saturday			mins.
Sunday			mins.
Total minutes for the week:			

How can I overcome common physical activity roadblocks?

Starting a physical activity program and sticking with it may be easier than you think. Here are some ideas on how to overcome your roadblocks to physical activity.

Time. Are work, family, and other demands making it hard for you to be active? Here are some ways to add physical activity to your daily routine. Remember, every little bit counts.

- **Do 10 minutes of exercise at a time.** Spread these bursts of activity out throughout the day.
- **Add a daily 15-minute walk during your lunch break or after dinner.** If your schedule allows and you can do so safely near your home or work, taking a walk may help you clear your head.



Motivation or interest. Is it hard to get moving? Does working out seem boring or like a chore? Here are some ways to keep physical activity interesting.

- **Switch it up.** Try a new activity each day like dancing or planting a garden to find out what you enjoy most.
- **Make it social.** Involve your family and friends in physical activity to have fun, spend quality time together, and stay on track.
 - Meet a friend for workouts or to train together for a charity event. Join a class or sports league where people count on you to show up.
 - No matter what age your kids are, find an activity you can do together. Dance to music, take a walk, run around the park, or play basketball or soccer.
- **Use videos.** Work out to fitness videos or DVDs. Check out a different DVD from the library each week for variety.



- **Enlist support.** Who will remind you to get off the couch and help you reach your goals?

List the people—your partner, brother, sister, parent, kids, or friends—who can support your efforts to be physically active. Give them ideas about how they can help, like praising your efforts, watching your kids, or working out with you.

Weather.

- **Wear the right gear.** A rain jacket, sunhat and sunscreen, or winter clothes will help you beat the weather.
- **Find a place to exercise indoors.** Walk in a mall when the weather is bad. Your local community center may offer low-cost options.

Money. Working out does not have to cost a lot of money to help you meet your goals.

- **Check out your local recreation or community center.** These centers may cost less than other gyms, fitness centers, or health clubs. Find one that lets you pay only for the months or classes you want, instead of the whole year. Ask if the center offers child care.
- **Choose physical activities that do not require any special gear.** Walking requires a pair of sturdy shoes. To dance, just turn on some music.

Make a plan to break through your roadblocks. What are the top three things that are keeping YOU from being more active? Write down these barriers and ideas for how you can overcome them.

Barrier 1: _____

Solutions: _____

Barrier 2: _____

Solutions: _____

Barrier 3: _____

Solutions: _____

Track your progress. Seeing your progress in black and white can help keep you moving. Think about how you will track your progress each day, including the type of activity and how long you spend doing it.

Activity	Length of time

Plan ahead to avoid setbacks. For example, find other ways to be active in case of bad weather, injury, or other unusual situations. If you do have a setback, do not give up. Regroup and focus on meeting your goal again as soon as you can.

Be safe.

- **Warm up and cool down.** To help avoid injury, be sure to warm up and cool down. To warm up, do the activity you plan to do at the start of your workout but at a lower intensity or slower pace. Do the same to cool down. For example, if your exercise of choice is a fast walk, walk slowly for 5 minutes at the beginning and end of your workout.
- **Start slowly.** If you are starting a new physical activity program, go slow at the start. Even if you are doing an activity that you once did well, start up again slowly to lower your chance of injury or burnout.
- **Drink fluids.**
- **Take it easy at first and see how you feel before trying more challenging workouts.** Stop if you feel out of breath, dizzy, faint, or nauseated, or if you have pain.
- **Do existing health issues make it hard for you to be more active?** If you have a health problem (diabetes, heart disease, asthma) or an injury, talk with your health care provider about how to safely add physical activity to your life.



Keep it going!

Choosing physical activities you enjoy and that match your interests and abilities will help you stick with them for the long run. As you reach your goals, think about how you can do even more. For example, if you are walking 3 days a week, add another day and turn up the speed of your walk.

You can try new activities too. To add variety

- try low-impact aerobics or water aerobics for 30 minutes, 2 days a week
- walk on a treadmill or outdoors for 30 minutes, 1 day a week
- lift weights 2 days a week

Reward yourself. Set goals for yourself on a regular basis. Write down how you are going to reward yourself for meeting your goals. Think of rewards that may motivate you to do even more, like taking a relaxing hot bath or shower, trying a new healthy recipe with friends, working out with new music, or joining an affordable sports team, recreation center, or exercise class.

Resources

Additional Reading from the Weight-control Information Network

The following publications are available online at <http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications> and also by calling the Weight-control Information Network (WIN) toll-free at 1-877-946-4627:

Active at Any Size! explains the benefits of regular physical activity and describes activities that people who are overweight or obese can enjoy safely.

Better Health and You: Tips for Adults helps adults plan steps toward consuming healthier foods and beverages and being more physically active. Featuring a tear-off tip sheet perfect for posting on your fridge, this brochure also explains the benefits of getting healthy and the harmful effects of being overweight.

Changing Your Habits: Steps to Better Health explains how people can take small steps to become more physically active and consume healthier foods and beverages.

Choosing a Safe and Successful Weight-loss Program offers guidelines to help readers talk with their health care providers about weight-loss programs.

Do You Know Some of the Health Risks of Being Overweight? This fact sheet explains the harmful effects of being overweight and the benefits of losing weight.

The World Around You provides tips on how to use the world around you, no matter who you are or where you live, to stay healthy and fit.

Walking...A Step in the Right Direction! explains how to start a walking program, presents a sample program, and shows stretches for warming up and cooling down.

Additional Resources

2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Discusses the benefits of physical activity and the types and amounts that Americans need to stay healthy. <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines>

SuperTracker Website. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Allows users to develop personalized plans for physical activity and healthy eating, and track their progress over time. <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/default.aspx>

We Can! (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition) is a national program designed for families and communities to help children maintain a healthy weight. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/index.htm>

Inclusion of resources is for information only and does not imply endorsement by NIDDK or WIN.

Why should I participate in clinical trials?

Clinical trials are research studies involving people. Clinical trials look at safe and effective new ways to prevent, detect, or treat disease. Researchers also use clinical trials to look at other aspects of care, such as improving the quality of life for people with chronic illnesses. To learn more about clinical trials, why they matter, and how to participate, visit the NIH Clinical Research Trials and You website at <http://www.nih.gov/health/clinicaltrials>. For information about current studies, visit <http://www.ClinicalTrials.gov>.

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The Weight-control Information Network (WIN) is a national information service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). WIN provides the general public, health professionals, and the media with science-based, up-to-date, culturally relevant materials and tips. Topics include healthy eating, barriers to physical activity, portion control, and eating and physical activity myths.

Publications produced by WIN are carefully reviewed by both NIDDK scientists and outside experts. This brochure was also reviewed by Tricia Leahey, Ph.D., Assistant Professor (Research), Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, The Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University.

This brochure is not copyrighted. WIN encourages you to copy and share as many copies as desired. This brochure is also available at <http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov>.

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