



Staying Physically Active

To truly be healthy and keep your weight under control, you have to do more than simply practice healthy eating. You have to make physical activity an important part of your day.

The Benefits of Exercise

The quote from Covert Bailey above says it all—there are many, many benefits to exercise. And those benefits are both physical and mental.

Physical Benefits

Here are some of the physical benefits of exercise:

- You feel stronger and have more energy.
- You look better.
- You lower your risk for heart disease, stroke, certain cancers, diabetes and high blood pressure.
- You can reach—and stay at—a healthy weight more easily.
- It's easier for you to do daily tasks like moving around, bending over, climbing stairs, etc.
- You keep your bones, muscles, and joints strong and can even help relieve arthritis pain.

Mental Benefits

There are also mental benefits to exercise:

- Exercise can take your mind off your problems and help you better deal with stress and anxiety. It forces you to be “in the present” and not worry about things in the future.
- Exercise can help keep your mind sharp as you get older.

Seeing a Doctor First

Should you see a doctor before beginning an exercise program? If you’re simply going to introduce some fairly modest exercises like moving around more or you are going to walk more each day, you probably don’t need to see a doctor first, though you should mention your routine the next time you visit your doctor.

However, if you have any questions about starting to exercise, it would be best to consult with your doctor, especially if you:

- have heart trouble, frequent chest pain or pressure, or high blood pressure
- often feel faint or dizzy
- have arthritis or other bone or joint problems
- have diabetes (your medicine may need to be adjusted)
- are older than age 60 and not accustomed to exercise
- have two or more risk factors for heart disease, including high cholesterol, high blood pressure, smoking, obesity, an inactive lifestyle, or a family history of heart disease before age 50

Types of Exercise

There are different types of exercise, but most can be placed into one of two categories.

- **Aerobic** means “with oxygen” and includes everything that makes you breathe harder as you continually move your muscles at a regular, even pace. Examples of aerobic exercise are jogging, biking, swimming, and cross-country skiing. A higher aerobic capacity gives you more endurance and allows you to work at a more intense level for a longer period of time.
- **Anaerobic** means “without oxygen” and includes exercises like weight lifting that are of relatively short duration. Anaerobic exercise can build strength and speed.

The Benefits of a Simple Walk

When people think of exercising, they often think of having to sweat in a gym or jogging five miles a day. But you can achieve enormous health benefits simply by walking on a regular basis. And that's something almost everyone can do.

On average, a walk of moderate intensity burns about 250 to 340 calories in an hour.

Here are some tips about walking on a regular basis:

- Start with small, short-term goals you can reach. You might start with 15-minute walks three times a week, for example.
- Start each walk with a warm-up period. Pick up your pace in the middle of the walk, then slow down at the end.
- Walk fast enough to raise your heart rate and make you breathe harder. But don't walk so fast you can't talk.
- Wear comfortable shoes with good arch support.
- Some have found it helpful to find a friend, family member, or co-worker to walk with. A pet can also be a great companion on a walk.
- Some have found that a pedometer—a small device that counts your steps—keeps them interested and motivated.

Here's a 12-week walking program developed by the Mayo Clinic:

Weeks	Total Time (min)	Days	Approx. hours per week
1	20	3	1
2	20	3	1
3-4	25	4	1¼
5-6	30	3-4	1½ - 2
7-8	35	3-4	2-3
9-10	40	4-5	3-3½
11-12	40	5-6	3½-4

A good goal is to walk 5 miles a day or be active for at least an hour a day

The F.I.T.T Principle

An easy way to get started is utilizing the F.I.T.T. principle. This acronym stands for Frequency, Intensity, Time and Type.

Frequency: As you might expect, this refers to how often you will exercise. After any form of exercise is performed, your body completes a process of rebuilding and repairing. So, determining the frequency of exercise is important in order to find a balance that provides just enough stress for the body to adapt and also allows enough rest time for healing.

Intensity: This is the amount of effort or work that must be invested in a specific exercise workout. This too requires a good balance to ensure that the intensity is hard enough to overload the body but not so difficult that it results in over-training, injury, or burnout.

Time: Time is simply how long each individual session should last. This will vary based on the intensity and type.

Type: What type of exercise will you be doing? Will an exercise session be primarily cardiovascular, resistance training or a combination of both? And, what specific exercises will you perform?

The Importance of Stretching

Stretching keeps you flexible and helps with sore or tense muscles. It also helps you avoid injury, improves your balance and posture and can be a great way to relax. The best part? It's free!

There are a variety of ways to bring stretching into your life:

- Stretch at home when you first get up in the morning or before you go to bed at night (or both).
- Take a stretching class at a gym or health club.
- Try yoga or Tai Chi. These are great ways to stay flexible and reduce stress. Even professional athletes are using these to prevent injury and increase their range of motion.
- Basic stretches are easy to learn. But keep these things in mind:
- Ease into stretches.

- Hold each stretch for at least 20 to 30 seconds.
- Breathe normally during a stretch—do not hold your breath.

Resources You Can Use

Here are some great resources you can use for help in getting—and staying—more active.

Organization	Website
American Council on Exercise	www.acefitness.org
Healthier US Initiative	www.healthierus.gov
Shape Up America	www.shapeup.org/shape/steps.php
Small Step	www.smallstep.gov/
Stretches at your desk	http://www.shelterpub.com/fitness/desk_stretches/stretches_graphic.html
Women’s Heart Foundation	http://www.womensheartfoundation.org/content/Exercise/stretching_exercise.asp