



EXERCISE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR HEALTHY AGING

# GET FIT FOR LIFE





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# GET FIT FOR LIFE

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**WHAT'S INSIDE**

**This booklet will help you learn about exercise and physical activity as you age.**



## WHAT'S INSIDE

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You've probably heard that physical activity, including exercise, is good for you. If you're already active, keep it up! But it may be time to push yourself a little harder, try a new activity, or find new ways to add exercise to your daily life.



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Don't worry if you're not currently active, have never exercised, or had stopped these good habits for some reason. It's never too late to get moving, and by picking up this booklet and looking through it, you've taken an important step toward better health.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE?



### **Physical activity**

refers to any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy.

**Exercise** is a form of physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive and performed with the goal of improving health or fitness. Although all exercise is physical activity, not all physical activity is exercise.



This guide can help you learn about the many types and benefits of exercise and physical activity, find out how to get started, reduce your health risks by doing activities safely, and celebrate your progress. Included are worksheets to record your activities and tips to help you be active in ways that suit your lifestyle, interests, health and budget.

Throughout the guide, you'll find personal stories and tips that we hope will inspire you to be more active every day and to get back on track if there's a break in your routine. Whether you're just starting out, getting back to exercising after a break, or are fit enough to run a three-mile race, this guide is for everyone, including those who live with a disability or chronic health concern.

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To find out how NIA can help you be more active, visit our website at [www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity](https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity).

Here, you will find exercise examples, tracking tools, information about safety, tips for motivation and more.





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CHAPTER 1

# THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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## WHY IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SO IMPORTANT?

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Eating a nutritious diet and maintaining a healthy weight are only part of a healthy lifestyle. Almost anyone, at any age, can exercise safely and get meaningful benefits.



Research shows that regular physical activity, including exercise, is important to the physical, emotional and [mental health](#) of almost everyone. As you age, being physically active can help you stay strong and fit enough so you can continue to do the things you enjoy and maintain your independence.

In fact, studies show that “taking it easy” is risky. Often, inactivity is more to blame than age when older people lose the ability to do things on their own. Regular physical activity over long periods of time can produce long-term health benefits. That’s why health experts say that older adults should be regularly active throughout each week to maintain optimal health.



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Research shows the benefits of physical activity go beyond physical well-being. Exercise and physical activity help support emotional and mental health.

Physical activities — like walking, biking, dancing, yoga or tai chi — can improve your mood and overall emotional well-being and help reduce feelings of depression and stress; increase your energy level; improve your sleep; and empower you to feel more in control. In addition, exercise and physical activity may possibly improve or help maintain some aspects of cognitive function, such as your ability to shift quickly between tasks, focus your attention on a new activity, or plan an outing with friends or family members.

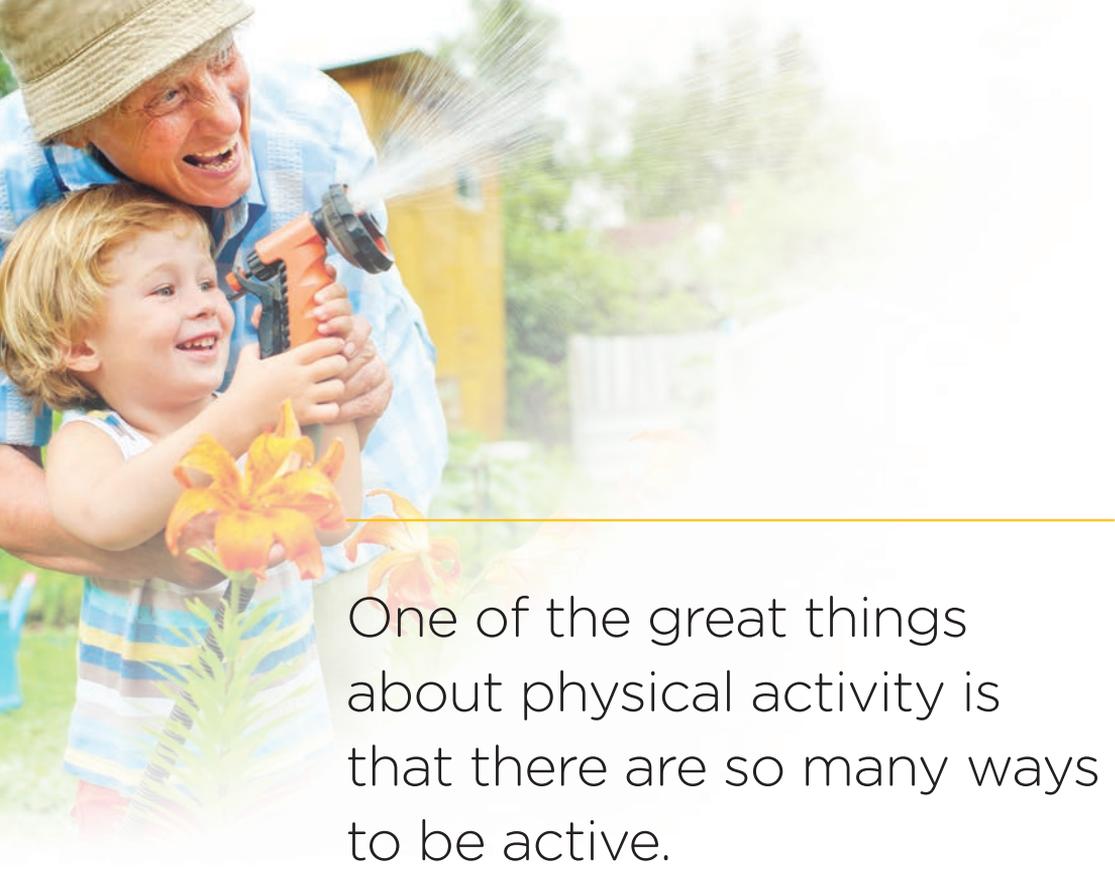




What's more, regular exercise and physical activity can reduce the risk of developing some diseases and disabilities that develop as people grow older. In some cases, exercise can help manage chronic conditions. For example, studies show that people with [heart disease](#), [arthritis](#) and [diabetes](#) benefit from regular exercise. Exercise also helps people with [high blood pressure](#), balance problems and difficulty walking.

## BEING ACTIVE AND EXERCISING REGULARLY CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

**“Before I joined a water aerobics class at the local fitness center near my home, I spent most days on the sofa watching television,” says Marie. “At age 66, I now have more energy than ever and can move more easily, and I have less back pain.”**



One of the great things about physical activity is that there are so many ways to be active.

For example, you can be active in short spurts throughout the day, or you can set aside specific times of the day on specific days of the week to exercise. Many physical activities — such as brisk walking, raking leaves or taking the stairs whenever you can — are [free or low cost](#) and do not require special equipment. You could also try a workout video on YouTube or another online service at home. Or, try contacting your local fitness center, senior center, or parks and recreation department about facilities and programs in your area, which may offer senior discounts. [Staying safe](#) while you exercise is always important, whether you are starting a new activity or have been active for a long time.

Today, we know a lot more about older adults and their need to exercise. Regardless of health and physical abilities, older adults can gain a lot by staying physically active. Even if you have difficulty standing or walking, you can still exercise and benefit from it. In fact, in most cases, you have more to lose by not doing anything!



## KNOW THE BENEFITS OF EXERCISE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Exercise and physical activity benefit every area of your life. Staying active can help you:

**Keep and improve your strength** so you can stay as independent as possible

**Have more energy** to do the things you want to do and reduce fatigue

**Improve your balance**, lower risk of falls and lessen injuries from falls

**Manage and prevent some diseases** like arthritis, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some types of cancer, including breast and colon cancer

**Perk up your mood** and reduce feelings of depression

**Sleep better at night**

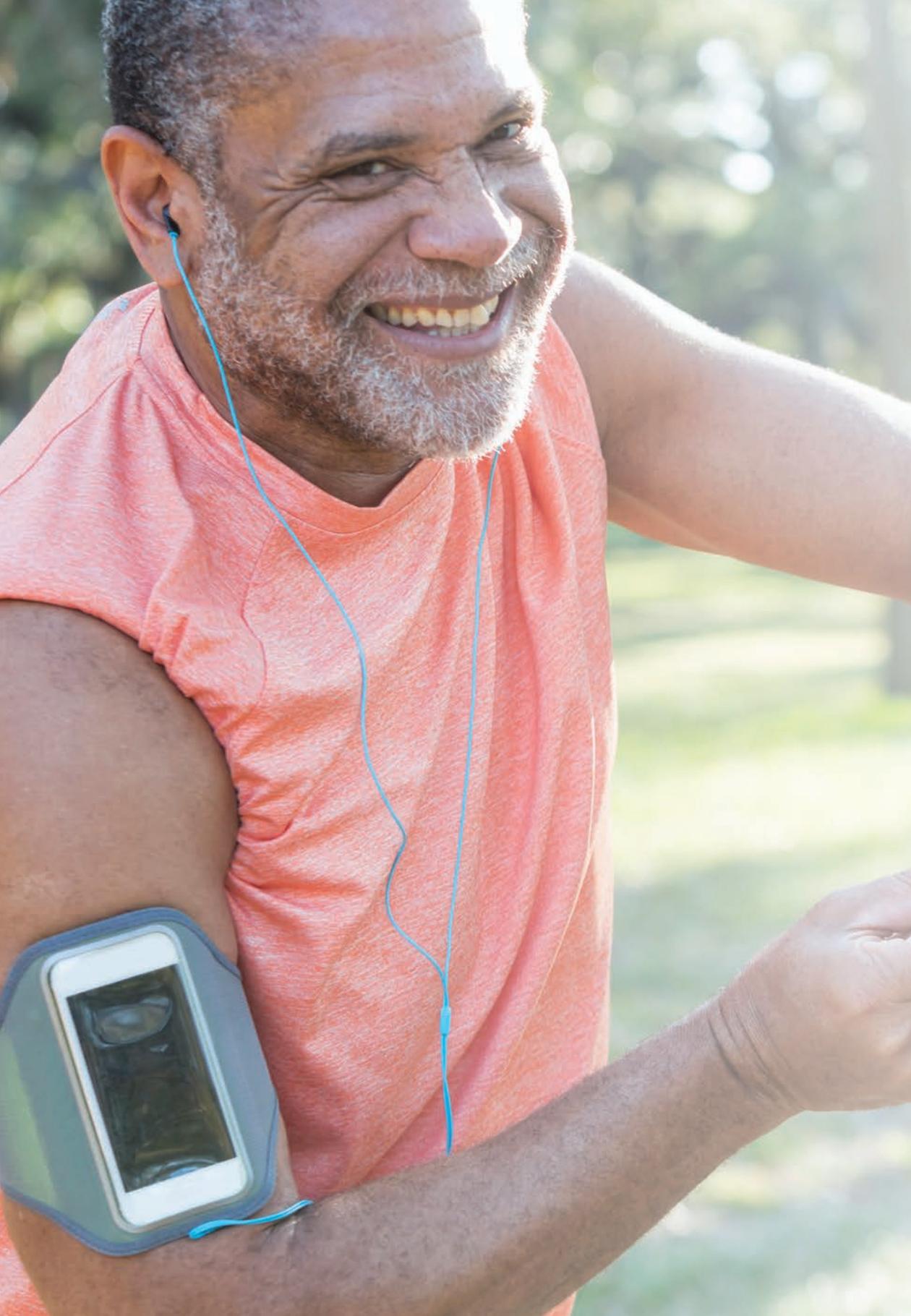
**Reduce levels of stress** and anxiety

**Lose weight** or reduce weight gain when combined with reduced calorie intake

**Control your blood pressure**

**Possibly improve or maintain some aspects of cognitive function**, such as your ability to shift quickly between tasks or plan an activity





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CHAPTER 2

# GETTING STARTED

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WHAT KINDS OF EXERCISES AND  
PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

# IMPROVE HEALTH AND PHYSICAL ABILITY?

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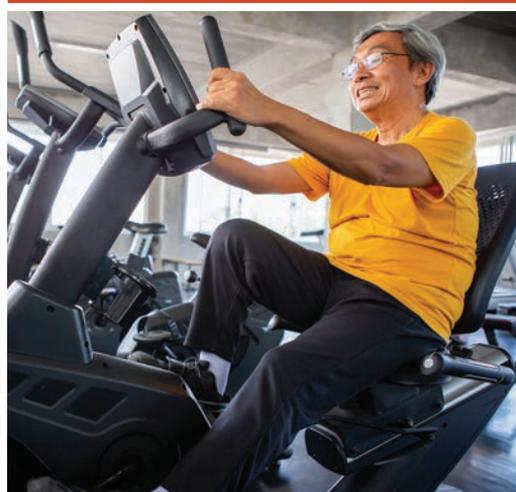
No matter your age,  
you can find activities  
that meet your fitness  
level and needs.



Most people tend to focus on one type of exercise or activity and think they're doing enough. Research has shown that it's important to get all four types of exercise: **endurance, strength, balance** and **flexibility**. Each one has different benefits. Doing one kind also can improve your ability to do the others, and variety helps reduce boredom and risk of injury.

# QUICK TIP

TEST YOUR EXERCISE INTENSITY



**When you're active, try talking:**

If you're breathing hard but can still have a conversation easily, it's **moderate-intensity activity**.

If you can only say a few words before you need to take a breath, it's **vigorous-intensity activity**.



## ENDURANCE

Endurance — also known as aerobic — activities increase your breathing and heart rate.

These activities help keep you healthy, improve your fitness, and help you perform the tasks you need to do every day. Endurance exercises improve the health of your heart, lungs and circulatory system. They also can delay or prevent many diseases that are common in older adults, such as diabetes, colon and breast cancers, heart disease and others.



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES THAT BUILD ENDURANCE INCLUDE:

- **Brisk walking**
- **Yard work (mowing, raking)**
- **Dancing**
- **Jogging**
- **Swimming**
- **Biking**
- **Climbing stairs or hills**
- **Playing tennis**
- **Playing basketball**

Try to build up to at least 150 minutes of activity a week that makes you breathe hard.

These activities are called endurance activities because they build your energy or “staying power.” Try to be active throughout your day to reach this goal and avoid sitting for long periods of time.

# SAFETY TIPS



**Do a little light activity**, such as easy walking, before and after your endurance activities to warm up and cool down.

**Listen to your body:** endurance activities should not cause dizziness, chest pain or pressure, or a feeling like heartburn.

**Be sure to drink liquids** when doing any activity that makes you sweat. If your doctor has told you to limit your fluids, be sure to check before increasing the amount of fluid you drink while exercising.

**If you are going to be outdoors**, be aware of your surroundings.

**Dress in layers** so you can add or remove clothes as needed for hot and cold weather.

**To prevent injuries**, use safety equipment, such as a helmet when bicycling.

# STRENGTH

Your muscular strength can make a big difference. When you have strong muscles, you can get up from a chair by yourself, lift your grandchildren, and walk through a park. Keeping your muscles strong can help with your balance and prevent falls and fall-related injuries. You are less likely to fall when your leg and hip muscles are strong.

Some people call using weight to improve your muscle strength “strength training” or “resistance training.”



## STRENGTH EXERCISES INCLUDE:



### LIFTING WEIGHTS

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Try to do strength exercises for all your major muscle groups at least two days per week, but don't exercise the same muscle group two days in a row. If you're just starting, you might need to use one- or two-pound weights, or no weight at all. Your body needs to get used to strength exercises. You can use common objects from your home, such as bottled water or soup cans. Or, you can use the strength-training equipment at a fitness center or gym. Use light weights the first week, then gradually add more. Starting out with weights that are too heavy can cause injuries. Use proper form for safety. To prevent injury, don't jerk or thrust weights into position. Use smooth, steady movements. Avoid "locking" your arm and leg joints in a tightly straightened position.



## USING A RESISTANCE BAND

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Resistance bands are stretchy elastic bands that come in several strengths, from light to heavy. You can use them in some strength exercises instead of weights. If you are a beginner, try exercising without the band until you are comfortable, then add the band. Choose a light band if you are just starting to exercise and move on to a stronger band when you can do two sets of 10 to 15 repetitions easily. Hold on to the band tightly (some bands have handles) or wrap it around your hand or foot to keep it from slipping and causing possible injury. Do the exercises in a slow, controlled manner, and don't let the band snap back.

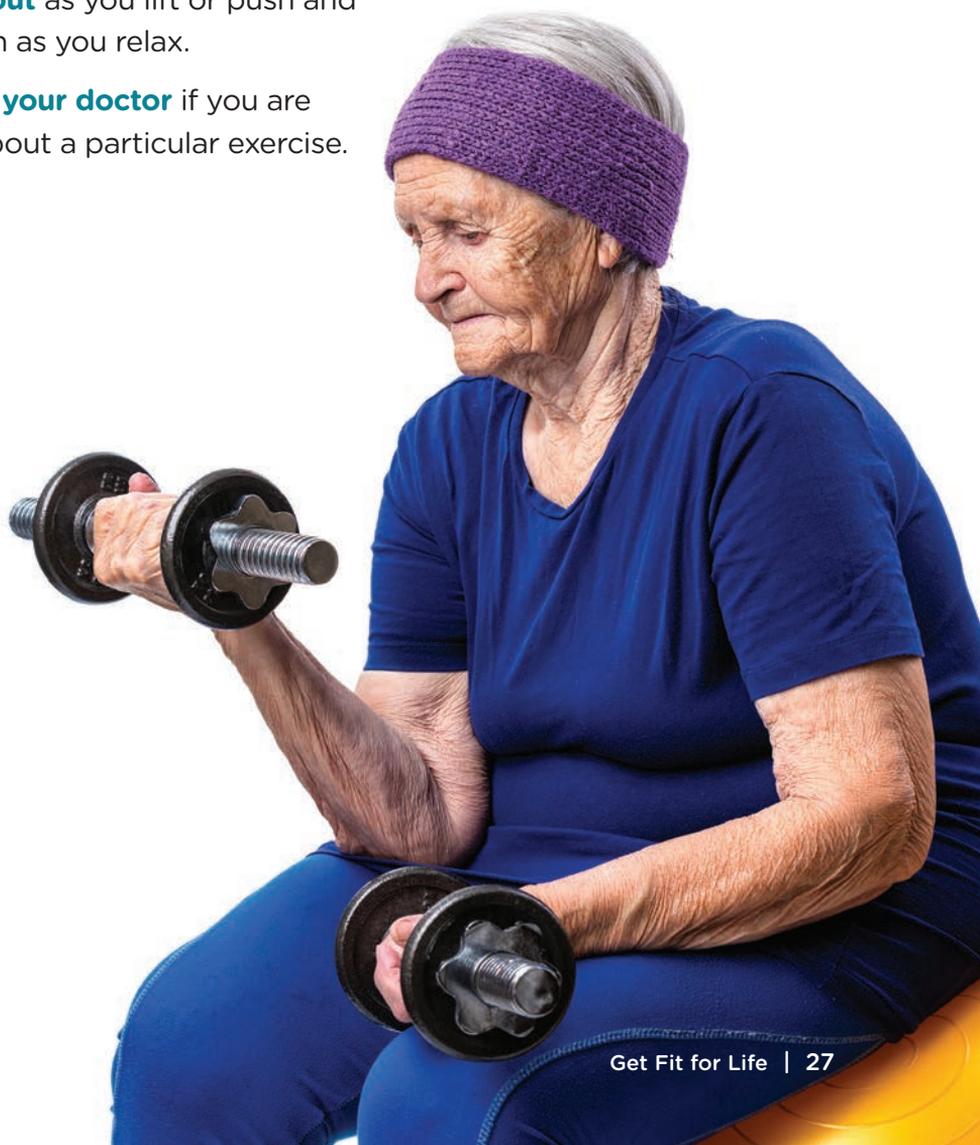


# SAFETY TIPS:

**Don't hold your breath** during strength exercises: Breathe regularly.

**Breathe out** as you lift or push and breathe in as you relax.

**Talk with your doctor** if you are unsure about a particular exercise.





## BALANCE

Balance exercises [help prevent falls](#), a common problem in older adults that can have serious consequences. Many lower-body strength exercises also will improve your balance.

Exercises to improve your balance include tai chi, a “moving meditation” that involves shifting the body slowly, gently and precisely while breathing deeply.

## TRY STANDING ON ONE FOOT, THEN THE OTHER.

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If at first you need support, hold on to something sturdy. Work your way up to balancing without support. Try getting up from a chair without using your hands or arms.



**Marian, 85, has found that regular tai chi classes have improved her balance and flexibility. “Each morning, I join a group at the local senior center. We practice tai chi for about an hour. We start with a gentle warm-up and breathing exercises. Our instructor leads us step by step through certain movements. We then end with cooling-down exercises. This class helps keep my arthritis under control. It has also reduced my fear of falling.”**



## SAFETY TIPS:

**Have a sturdy chair** or a person nearby to hold on to if you feel unsteady.

**Talk with your doctor** if you are unsure about a particular exercise.

### TRY THE HEEL-TO-TOE WALK.

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As you walk, put the heel of one foot just in front of the toes of your other foot. Your heel and toes should touch or almost touch.



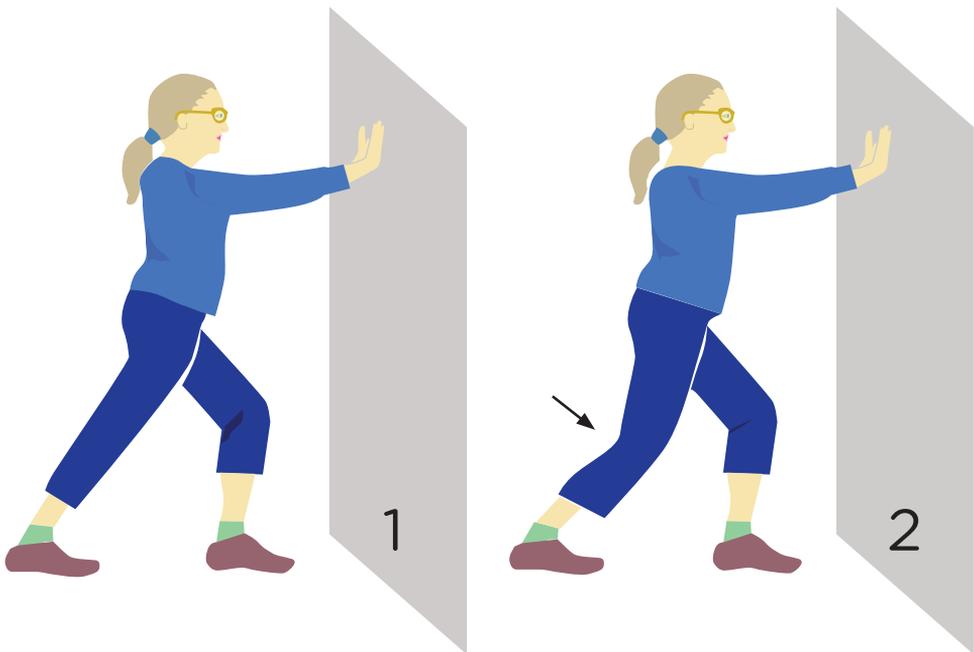
## FLEXIBILITY

Stretching can improve your flexibility. Moving more freely will make it easier for you to reach down to tie your shoes or look over your shoulder when you back up your car.



## TRY THE CALF STRETCH EXERCISE.

Stand facing a wall. Position yourself slightly farther than arm's length away from the wall, with your feet shoulder-width apart. Step forward with your left leg and bend your left knee. Keeping both feet flat on the floor, bend your right knee slightly until you feel a stretch in your right calf muscle. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds, and then return to starting position. Repeat with right leg.





## TRY THE ANKLE STRETCH EXERCISE.

Sit securely toward the edge of a sturdy, armless chair. Stretch your legs out in front of you. Keeping your heels on the floor, flex your toes off the floor and toward you. Hold the position for 10 to 30 seconds. Point your toes away from you and hold for 10 to 30 seconds.

# SAFETY TIPS

**Stretch when your muscles are warmed up.**

**Stretch after** endurance or strength exercise.

**Don't stretch so far** that it hurts.

**Always remember to breathe** normally while holding a stretch.

**Talk with your doctor** if you are unsure about a particular exercise.





## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES

# GO TOGETHER

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Exercise and physical activity are good for your health. In addition, improving your endurance, strength, balance and flexibility can help with your everyday activities.



## QUICK TIP:

### GO SLOW WHEN BEGINNING AN EXERCISE ROUTINE

If you haven't been active for a long time, it's important to start out at a low level of effort and work your way up slowly. Beginning slowly will help you become more fit without straining your body.





# HOW MUCH ACTIVITY DO OLDER ADULTS NEED?

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According to the [\*Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans\*](#) you should do at least **150 minutes (2½ hours)** a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity,\* like brisk walking or fast dancing.

\*See **Quick Tip: Test Your Exercise Intensity** on page 21.

Being active at least three days a week is best but doing anything is better than doing nothing at all. You should also do muscle-strengthening activities, like lifting weights or doing push-ups, at least **two days a week**. The Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that as part of your weekly physical activity, you do multicomponent physical activity that includes balance training as well as aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities. If you prefer vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (like running), aim for at least **75 minutes a week**.



**Adults need a mix of physical activity to stay healthy.**

**Moderate-intensity aerobic activity\***

Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts.

at least  
**150**  
minutes  
a week

AND

**Muscle-strengthening activity**

Do activities that make your muscles work harder than usual.

at least  
**2**  
days  
a week



If you prefer vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (like running), aim for at least **75 minutes a week**.

If that's more than you can do right now, **do what you can**. Even 5 minutes of physical activity has real health benefits.

Walk. Run. Dance. Play. **What's your move?**





## FIT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INTO **YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE**

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There are many ways to squeeze a little physical activity into your day. To get the most out of your efforts, they need to be a regular part of your life.



Here are some ideas to help:

1

## MAKE IT A PRIORITY.

Remember that being active is one of the most important things you can do each day to [maintain and improve health](#). (See

**Questions to Ask Yourself about Everyday Activities** on page 107.)

2

## MAKE IT EASY.

**You are more likely to exercise if it's a convenient part of your day.**

- Walk every aisle of the grocery store when you go shopping.
- Try being active first thing in the morning before you get too busy.
- Combine physical activity with a task that's already part of your day, such as walking the dog or doing household chores.
- Join a gym or local senior center that's close to your home and easy to get to.
- Take one or more flights of stairs – e.g., one up and two down.



Tom prefers to start his day with exercise as part of his daily routine.

**“Each morning, I do stretching exercises, then hop on my exercise bike or take a walk in my neighborhood. Exercise helps me stay active and gives me energy to keep up with my three grandchildren.”**



## MOVE MORE AND STAY CONNECTED

Consider starting a **walking club** with friends or an **exercise class** at your local library.

Learn more at [www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov).

3

## MAKE IT SOCIAL.



Many people agree that an “exercise buddy” keeps them going and gives them the added benefit of emotional support.

- Take a walk during lunch with co-workers.
- Try a dance class — salsa, tango, square dancing — it’s up to you.
- Use [family gatherings](#) as a time to play team sports or do outdoor activities.
- Playing tennis may be for you if you enjoy two-person activities.
- If group activities appeal to you, try a sport such as pickleball or join an exercise class.
- Set regular meetups to exercise as a group for accountability and a sense of camaraderie.



4

## MAKE IT FUN.

Do [activities you enjoy](#) to make exercise more fun. If you love the outdoors, try [biking](#) or [hiking](#), or try listening to music while you garden or wash the car.

5

## MAKE IT HAPPEN.

[Plan to be active](#) in many places and in many ways.

- Be realistic based on how physically active you are now. (See **Questions to Ask Yourself about Getting Ready to Exercise** on page 103.)
- Be specific about the details. (See **Questions to Ask Yourself about Making Regular Physical Activity a Habit** on page 105.)
- Make a weekly worksheet that details your activities (see page 117).

Search for [Move Your Way: Tips for Busy Days](#) on YouTube for more tips on fitting more activity into your day.

## Exercise is key to healthy aging.

Physical activity can make your muscles stronger, increase your heart rate, improve your balance, and stretch your muscles, just to name a few benefits.

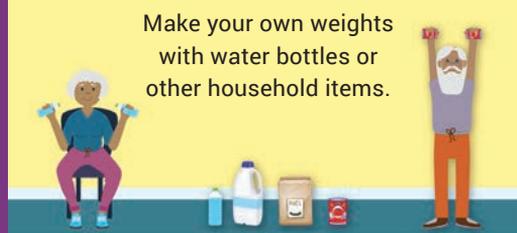
Try all 4 types of exercise for the most benefits: **endurance, strength, balance and flexibility**. Not sure how to get moving?

### Here are some ideas that don't cost a dime.

Go for a hike in a park or up and down some stairs.



Make your own weights with water bottles or other household items.



Participate in a community-sponsored cleanup or fun run/walk.



Join a local recreational sports league.



Walk or roll with friends or family at the mall or around your neighborhood.





STARTING TO BE ACTIVE AGAIN

# AFTER A BREAK

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Getting into a regular exercise routine is important, but things may happen in life that can disrupt your best intentions.

Life events that can interrupt your exercise routine include illness, new caregiving responsibilities, the death of a loved one, traveling for business or vacation, visiting children and grandchildren, a new job, or moving to a new home.

**These breaks can make it hard to stick with your regular activities, so here are a few ideas to help you stay active or start again if you've had to stop.**



- Don't be too hard on yourself.** Recognize there will be times when you won't want to exercise, won't be able to, or it feels too hard. You are not alone; everyone has those feelings. Try to get back to your activities as soon as possible. The sooner you resume some sort of activity, the better you'll feel, and the easier it will be to get back into your routine.
  
- Talk with your doctor about when you can resume your regular routine** if you stopped exercising because of an illness, injury or new symptoms. He or she can help give you the boost you need to move past the hurdle.
  
- Think about the reasons you started being active** and the goals you set for yourself. Remembering your motivations and how much you've already accomplished may help recharge your batteries and get you started again.



- Ask family and friends to help you get back on track.** Sometimes, you may want an exercise buddy. At other times, all you may need is a word of support.
  
- Try something easier or an activity you haven't done recently** if you don't like the activity you started. You might even want to try something you've never done before. Mastering something simple or new may give you the confidence you need to resume a regular exercise program.
  
- Start again at a comfortable level** if you haven't been active for several weeks. Then gradually build back up. With a little time, you'll be back on track.

**Think creatively about other ways to be active**

if you can't do your regular physical activities because of bad weather or a change in your routine. For example, if caring for a loved one is keeping you indoors, try an exercise video, jog in place, dance around your living room, or walk up and down the stairs a few extra times. Just keep moving!

**Be flexible.** When your grandchildren come for a visit, reschedule your activity for during their nap time, or take them with you for a walk.

**Believe in yourself!** Feel confident that even if your activity is interrupted, you can start again and be successful. Don't worry about the time you missed. What's important is to focus on your fitness goals and start again at whatever level is possible for you.





# TIPS ON COPING WITH BREAKS IN YOUR ROUTINE

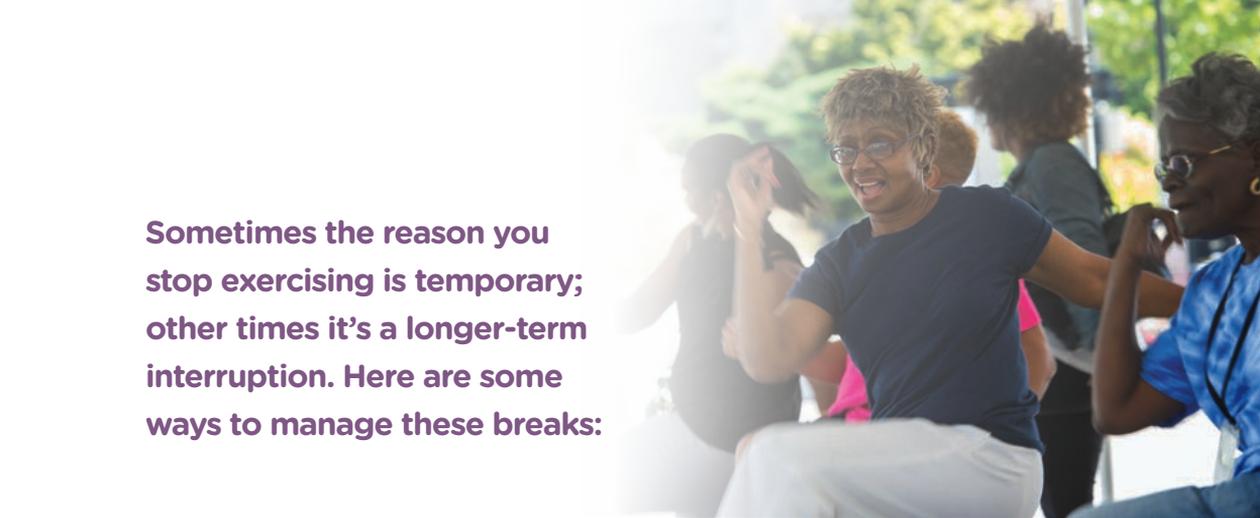
## TEMPORARY INTERRUPTIONS

### **A Change in Your Situation**

- When you're on vacation, visit the hotel fitness center. Bring along your exercise clothing or equipment (resistance band, bathing suit or walking shoes). Get out and see the sights on foot rather than just by tour bus or car. Consider renting a bike.
- Caring for an ill spouse can understandably interrupt your exercise routine. Work out to an exercise video when your spouse is napping. Ask a family member or friend to come over so you can go for a walk.

### **A Change in Your Health**

- If a temporary illness such as the flu keeps you out of action for a few weeks, wait until you feel better and then start your activity again. Gradually build back up to your previous level of activity.



**Sometimes the reason you stop exercising is temporary; other times it's a longer-term interruption. Here are some ways to manage these breaks:**

## LONG-TERM INTERRUPTIONS

### A Change in Your Situation

- If your exercise buddy moves away, ask another friend to go with you on your daily walk. Join an exercise class at your local community or senior center. This is a great way to meet other active people.
- If you move to a new community, check out the fitness centers, parks, and recreation associations in your new neighborhood. Look for activities that match your interests and abilities. Get involved!

### A Change in Your Health

- If you are recovering from surgery or have had a significant illness or change in your health, talk with your doctor about specific exercises and activities you can do safely when you're feeling better. Start slowly and gradually build up your activities as you become stronger.



# NO MORE EXCUSES!

## OVERCOME BARRIERS TO EXERCISE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Common barriers that keep people from being or staying physically active include lack of motivation, time and enjoyment, or simply inconvenience.

Don't let these stop you from exercising!

\*See **Questions to Ask Yourself about Your Exercise and Physical Activity Barriers** on page 109.



**Check out these tips to learn how you can stop making excuses and get moving to improve your health.**

### **No time.**

Do physical activities first thing in the morning or combine physical activity with a task that's already part of your day.

### **Too boring.**

Do things you enjoy and try new activities to keep physical activity interesting and fun.

### **Too expensive.**

You can use a pair of comfortable, non-skid shoes for many activities and soup cans or water bottles to strength train.

### **Too tired.**

Regular, moderate physical activity can help reduce fatigue and even help you manage stress.



## Exercising If You Have a Chronic Condition

Almost anyone, at any age, can do some type of physical activity.

You can still exercise even if you have a health condition like [heart disease](#), [arthritis](#), [chronic pain](#), [high blood pressure](#) or [diabetes](#). In fact, physical activity may help. For most older adults, brisk walking, riding a bike, swimming, weightlifting and gardening are safe, especially if you build up slowly.

For people with many types of physical disabilities, physical activity can reduce pain and improve fitness, physical function and quality of life. People who are active and have Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, a spinal cord injury or a stroke have better physical function, including walking ability, than less active adults with the same conditions. Check out resources from the [National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability](#) for tips on adapting physical activities for people with disabilities.



If you have any symptoms that haven't been diagnosed, or if you have a chronic condition that is not being monitored by a doctor, [check with your health care provider](#) before beginning an exercise routine.



## Exercising When You are Overweight

If you are overweight, don't let that stop you from doing all kinds of physical activity,

including all four types of exercise. If you have difficulty bending or moving easily or simply feel self-conscious, try different activities, like walking, water exercises, dancing or weightlifting, to see what works best for you. Anything that gets you moving — even for only a few minutes a day in the beginning — is a healthy start.



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

# EXERCISING WITH A CHRONIC CONDITION

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Read more about exercise and physical activity for specific chronic conditions.





## ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS

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Being active and getting exercise may help people with Alzheimer's or other dementias feel better and can help them maintain a healthy weight and have regular toilet and sleep habits. If you are a caregiver, you can exercise together to make it more fun.

Researchers are assessing the benefit of exercise to delay [mild cognitive impairment \(MCI\)](#) in older adults, and to improve brain function in older adults who may be at risk for developing Alzheimer's disease. **Older adults with MCI** may be able to safely do more vigorous forms of exercise, similar to older adults without MCI, provided there are no other underlying health concerns.



## TIPS FOR HELPING A PERSON WITH DEMENTIA STAY ACTIVE:

- **Take a walk** together each day. Exercise is good for caregivers, too!
- **Use exercise videos** or check online to see if there is a program to help older adults exercise.
- **Put some music** on and dance.
- **Be realistic** about how much activity can be done at one time. Several short “mini-workouts” may be best.
- **Make sure he or she wears comfortable clothes and shoes** that fit well and are made for exercise.
- **Make sure he or she drinks water** or juice after exercise.



**Even if the person has trouble walking, they may be able to:**

- **Do simple tasks** around the home, such as washing dishes and dusting.
- **Use a stationary bike.**
- **Use soft rubber exercise balls** or balloons for stretching or throwing back and forth.
- **Use stretching bands.**
- **Lift weights** or household items such as soup cans.

# ARTHRITIS

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**For people with arthritis, exercise can reduce joint pain and stiffness. It can also help with losing weight, which reduces stress on the joints.**

**Flexibility exercises** such as upper- and lower-body stretching and tai chi can help keep joints moving, relieve stiffness and give you more freedom of movement for everyday activities.

**Strengthening exercises**, particularly [weight-bearing exercises](#), such as weightlifting, will help you maintain or add to your muscle strength to support and protect your joints.

**Endurance exercises** make the heart and arteries healthier and may lessen swelling in some joints. Try [low-impact options](#) such as swimming and biking.

If you have arthritis, you may need to avoid some types of activity when joints are swollen or inflamed. If you have pain in a specific joint area, for example, you may need to focus on another area for a day or two.





## COPD (CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE)

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If you have COPD, talk with your health care provider or a pulmonary therapist for specific recommendations. You may be able to learn some exercises to help your arms and legs get stronger and/or exercises that strengthen the muscles needed for breathing.

Pulmonary rehabilitation is a program that helps you manage your disease with physical activity and counseling. It can help you stay active and carry out your day-to-day tasks.

# TYPE 2 DIABETES

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You can take small steps to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes. **Losing weight** may help. **Healthy eating** and **being physically active** can make a big difference. Work with your doctor to set up a plan to help you **make healthier food choices** and get regular **physical activity**.

If you already have diabetes, exercise and physical activity can help manage the disease and help you stay healthy longer. Walking and other forms of daily exercise can help improve glucose levels in older people with diabetes. Set a goal to be more active most days of the week and create a plan for being physically active that fits into your life and that you can follow. Your health care team can help.



## EASY STEPS TO BE MORE ACTIVE:

- Stretch during TV commercial breaks.
- Walk around when you talk on the phone.
- Take more steps by parking farther away from stores or your office.

Learn more about preventing and managing diabetes from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases at [www.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.niddk.nih.gov).



**Regular endurance exercise has helped Sidney stay healthy after major heart surgery.**

“About five years ago, I had triple bypass surgery. I didn’t exercise much before my surgery, but I knew I needed to be more active to stay healthy. I was worried about pushing myself. I started slowly and gradually built up to running outside and on the treadmill at my gym. Being active makes me feel better and it’s good for my heart.”

## HEART DISEASE

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Your heart keeps your body running. As you grow older, some changes in the heart and blood vessels are normal, but others are caused by disease. Choices you make every day, such as **eating healthy, maintaining a healthy weight and aiming to be more physically active**, can contribute to heart health. Inactive people are nearly twice as likely to develop heart disease as those who are active. A lack of physical activity can worsen other heart disease risk factors as well, such as high blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels, high blood pressure, diabetes and prediabetes, and being overweight and having obesity. Being physically active is one of the most important things you can do to keep your heart healthy. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week.



## OSTEOPOROSIS

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Your bones and muscles will be stronger if you are physically active. **Weight-bearing exercises**, which force you to work against gravity, such as walking, jogging or dancing three to four times a week, are best for preventing osteoporosis. Try some **strengthening** and **balance exercises**, too, to help you avoid **falls**, which could cause a broken bone.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND CANCER

Studies have shown that **physical activity may reduce your risk for many types of cancer**, including colon, breast and kidney. In addition, exercise — both before and after a cancer diagnosis — may help to improve survival in some cancers, particularly during and/or after treatment. Being active can also lead to improvements in anxiety, depression, fatigue and overall quality of life among cancer survivors. Physical activity also plays a role in reducing the adverse effects of some cancer treatments.





## CAREGIVERS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

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Are you a [caregiver](#) providing support for a spouse, friend or relative? Taking care of yourself is one of the most important things you can do as a caregiver.

Make sure you are [making time for yourself](#), [eating healthy foods](#) and being active. Finding time for regular exercise can be very important to your physical and [mental well-being](#). Physical activity can help reduce feelings of [depression](#) and stress, help you improve your health and prevent [chronic diseases](#).



**Learn how to take time for yourself to stay physically active:**

- **Take exercise breaks** throughout the day. Try three 10-minute “mini-workouts” instead of 30 minutes all at once.
- **Make an appointment with yourself to exercise.** Set aside specific times and days of the week for physical activity.
- **Exercise with a friend** and get the added benefit of emotional support.
- **Ask for help** at home so you can exercise.
- **If possible, find ways to be active with the person you’re caring for.** Both of you can benefit from physical activity!

SAMPLE EXERCISES:

# GETTING FIT FOR LIFE

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Many different exercises can improve your health and independence. Whatever type of exercise or physical activities you do, gradually work your way up to include endurance, strength, balance and flexibility exercises. Check out these resources to learn what exercises can help you to stay healthy as you get older. Learn how to fit exercise into your daily life safely and get motivated to get moving!

- Try [NIA videos](#) of varying lengths to improve your strength, balance and flexibility. Get going with NIA's [10-minute](#) and [15-minute](#) sample workouts for older adults. [www.youtube.com/user/NatInstituteOnAging/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/NatInstituteOnAging/videos)
- [Move Your Way](#) is a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services physical activity campaign built around the [second edition of the \*Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans\*](#). Rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach, this campaign emphasizes personalized, practical strategies that people can use to fit more activity into their busy lives. Check out the [Move Your Way](#) website at <https://health.gov/moveyourway> for an [activity planner](#), [videos](#), [a fact sheet for older adults](#) and other tips to make it easier to get more active.



For Michelle, one of the benefits of exercise includes reducing stress.

**“After work, I love going to my yoga class, which makes me slow down and breathe. I’m also building my strength, and stretching and toning my muscles, which makes me more flexible. Afterward, I feel calmer and more relaxed. I am less anxious about things.”**



- **SilverSneakers** is a free health and fitness program for adults 65+ that is included with many Medicare plans. You can exercise at a fitness center such as a gym or community center, or at home by accessing on-demand how-to videos, classes and workouts.
- **Eat Smart, Live Strong** from the U.S. Department of Agriculture is designed to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity among adults 60 to 74 who are participating in or eligible for Food and Nutrition Service nutrition assistance programs. The initiative addresses the unique learning needs of older adults and provides games and activities, opportunities to socialize, and simple exercises to demonstrate physical activity.
- The American Heart Association's **Healthy for Good™** campaign is aimed at creating lasting change in your health and your life with this approach: Eat smart. Add color. Move more. Be well. You can find science-based fitness information on exercises, walking and other ways to stay active, how to stay motivated, and health and safety tips.

- The Arthritis Foundation's [\*\*Walk with Ease\*\*](#) program can help participants develop a walking plan that meets their particular needs, stay motivated, manage pain and exercise safely. Resources include an online walking tool where you can record your activity and track your steps with a mobile app and how-to videos on warming up, stretching and strengthening exercises. Benefits may include increased walking distance and speed, decreased pain and decreased depression. You can also find arthritis resources from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on page 94.
- Check out the [\*\*National Council on Aging's Center for Healthy Aging\*\*](#) for evidence-based physical activity programs that may be available in your community: [strength training](#), exercise for [frail older adults](#), [older adults with osteoarthritis](#), and more. Also, learn about exercise programs for [fall prevention](#).
- The [\*\*YMCA\*\*](#) offers evidence-based group exercise programs for older adults to improve [fitness](#) and [balance for falls prevention](#).





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CHAPTER 3

# EXERCISE SAFELY

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# STAYING SAFE

**while you exercise is always important, whether you're starting a new activity or haven't been active for a long time.**

**Use these tips to play it safe and reduce your risk of injury.**

## ✓ **START SLOWLY.**

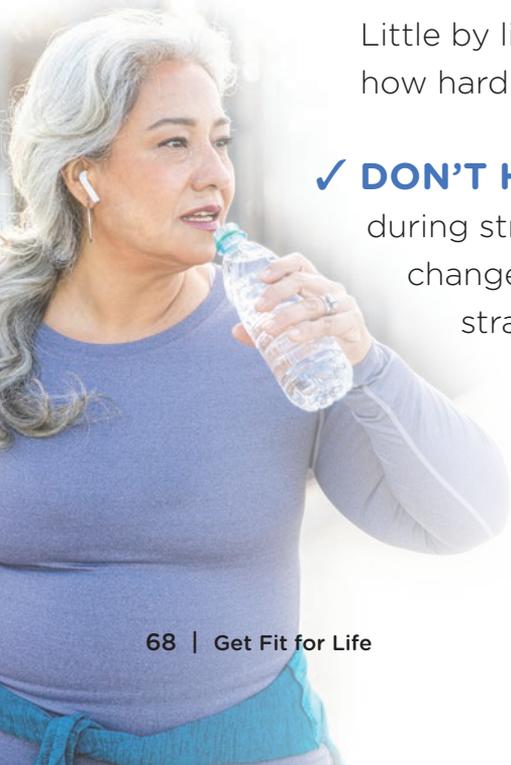
Little by little, build up your activities and how hard you work at them.

## ✓ **DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH**

during strength exercises. That could cause changes in your blood pressure. It may seem strange at first, but you should breathe out as you lift and breathe in as you relax.

## ✓ **USE SAFETY EQUIPMENT.**

For example, wear a helmet for [bike riding](#).



## ✓ **FIND THE RIGHT SHOES**

for walking or jogging:

- Choose shoes that are made for the type of physical activity you want to do.
- Look for shoes with flat, non-skid soles, good heel support, enough room for your toes and a cushioned arch that's not too high or too thick.
- Make sure the shoes fit well and provide proper support for your feet.
- Check your shoes regularly and replace them when they're worn out. You need new shoes when:
  - **The tread is worn out**
  - **Your feet feel tired after activity**
  - **Your shins, knees or hips hurt after activity**



### **Stop exercising if you:**

- **Have pain or pressure** in your chest, neck, shoulder or arm
- **Feel dizzy** or sick to your stomach
- **Break out in a cold sweat**
- **Have muscle cramps**
- **Feel severe pain** in joints, feet, ankles or legs



- ✓ **WEAR COMFORTABLE, LOOSE-FITTING CLOTHES** that allow you to move freely but won't catch on other objects.
- ✓ Unless your doctor has asked you to limit fluids, be sure to **DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS** before, during and after activities, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- ✓ **ALWAYS BEND FORWARD FROM THE HIPS, NOT THE WAIST.** If your back is straight, you're probably bending the right way.
- ✓ **WARM UP YOUR MUSCLES BEFORE YOU EXERCISE.** Try walking and light arm pumping first. After exercising, cool down by stretching for about five minutes to slow your heart rate and breathing as well as to relax the muscles you just used.





✓ **EXERCISE SHOULD NOT HURT OR MAKE YOU FEEL REALLY TIRED.**

You might feel some soreness, a little discomfort or a bit of weariness, but you should not feel pain. In fact, in many ways, being active will probably make you feel better.

✓ **PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR SURROUNDINGS WHEN EXERCISING OUTDOORS.**

Consider possible traffic hazards, the weather, uneven walking surfaces and others around you. Walk during the day or in well-lit areas at night. Ask someone to go with you.





✓ **DRESS APPROPRIATELY FOR THE TEMPERATURE OUTDOORS,** or opt

for an indoor activity if it's very [hot](#) or [cold](#) outside. For hot weather, wear [light-colored, loose-fitting clothes](#) in natural fabrics. Dress in layers so you can remove clothing as your body warms up from activity. For cold weather, wear several layers of loose clothing. The layers will trap warm air between them. Avoid tight clothing, which can keep your blood from flowing freely and lead to loss of body heat. Wear a waterproof coat or jacket if it's snowy or rainy, along with a hat, scarf and gloves.

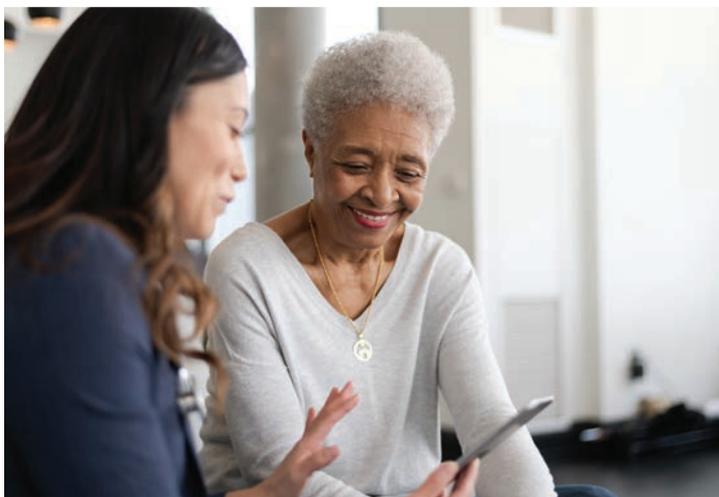
If you have specific health conditions, **discuss your exercise and physical activity plan with your [health care provider](#).** (See What You Should Know about Exercising with a Chronic Condition on page 52.)

To help you get active safely and avoid injuries, go to [www.youtube.com/user/NatlInstituteOnAging/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/NatlInstituteOnAging/videos) to watch exercise safety videos on how to stay safe while doing four types of exercise, choosing the right fitness shoes and clothes, exercising safely in hot and cold weather, bicycle safety tips and exercising safely outdoors.



# TALKING WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

ABOUT EXERCISE & PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY



While many people may not need to check with their health care provider, it might be a good idea, especially if you have a chronic condition or other health problems, aren't active and want to start a vigorous exercise program, or plan to significantly increase your physical activity. Your activity level is an important topic to discuss with your health care provider as part of your ongoing health care.





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CHAPTER 4

# STAY ON TRACK

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Now that you're ready to become more active, get the most from your activities and do them safely, how will you get started?

The key is to know your starting point and build slowly from there. Knowing your starting point will help you pick activities that are comfortable and realistic for you. Starting out this way will help you be successful.





## IDENTIFY YOUR STARTING POINT

Think about a typical weekday and weekend day. How much time do you spend sitting? How much time are you active? When you're up and moving, what kind of activities are you doing?

To figure out your activity level, try using an activity log. For a couple of weekdays and a weekend, keep track of how much time you exercise or are physically active by noting how much time you spend doing each activity.

Use the **Find Your Starting Point** worksheet on page 111 to help you get started.

You can use the last column of this worksheet to write down ways you think you can add activity to your daily routine. If you're not active yet, aim for a modest beginning and build from there. If you are already pretty active, you can be more ambitious about adding to your activities.

# QUICK TIP:

## OVEREXERTION

Overexertion can cause injury, which may lead to quitting. A steady rate of progress and building on successes is the best approach.

**How can you tell if you're getting more fit?** As you increase your activity, you'll probably notice other signs that you're becoming more fit, such as increased energy, greater ability to perform daily tasks, or even an improved outlook on life.

**How can you check your progress?** Use the **Monthly Progress Test** on page 113 to see if you are continuing to progress and need to update your goals. Each month, you will likely see an improvement.





## SET YOUR GOALS

Many people find that having a firm goal in mind motivates them to move ahead on a project. Goals are most useful when they are specific, realistic and important to you. Consider both short- and long-term goals. Your success depends on [setting goals](#) that really matter to you. Use the **Goal-Setting Worksheet** on page 119 to help you get started. Write down your goals, put them where you can see them often and review them regularly.

Short-term goals will help you make physical activity a regular part of your daily life. For these goals, think about the things you'll need to get or do in order to be physically active. For example, you may need to buy [walking shoes](#) or fill out a **Weekly Exercise and Physical Activity Plan** (see page 117) so you can figure out how to fit physical activity into your busy day. Make sure your short-term goals will truly help you be active. Here are a few examples of short-term goals:

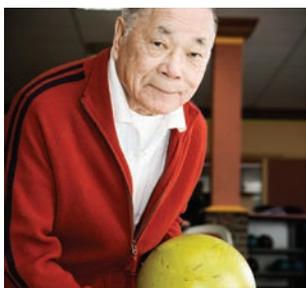
- Today, I will decide to be more active.
- Tomorrow, I will find out about exercise classes in my area.
- By the end of this week, I will talk with my friend about exercising with me a couple of times a week.
- In the next two weeks, I will make sure I have the shoes and comfortable clothes I need to start the activity I selected.
- By the end of the month, I will start an exercise class or physical activity.



**For Carl, 77, being able to do the things he enjoys motivates him to exercise every day.**

“I lift weights with my personal trainer at my gym twice a week and do stretching exercises. I also like bowling and fishing. I exercise so I can stay fit. It also helps keep my muscles strong and I have more energy to get going each day.”

If you’re already active, think of short-term goals to increase your level of physical activity. For example, over the next week or two, if you can have a conversation as you walk, work toward moving at a pace where the conversation becomes a little more challenging, increasing the amount of weight you lift, or trying a new kind of physical activity. No matter your starting point, reaching your short-term goals will make you feel good and give you confidence to progress toward your long-term goals.



**After you write down your short-term goals, you can identify your long-term goals. Focus on where you want to be six months, a year or two years from now. Long-term goals also should be realistic, personal and important to you. Here are a few examples:**

- By this time next year, I will swim one mile three times a week.
- Next summer, I will be able to play catch with my grandchildren.
- In six months, I will have my blood pressure under control by increasing my physical activity and following my doctor's advice.

Add your own long-term goals to the **Goal-Setting Worksheet** (see page 119).



## WRITE A PLAN TO ADD EXERCISE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TO YOUR LIFE

Some people find that writing an [exercise and physical activity plan](#) helps them be accountable. See if this works for you.

To get started, visit [www.nia.nih.gov/health/how-older-adults-can-get-started-exercise#plan](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/how-older-adults-can-get-started-exercise#plan). Be sure the plan is realistic for you to do, especially as you gain experience in how to be active. You might even make a contract with a friend or family member to carry out your plan. Involving another person can help you keep your commitment.

**Make your plan specific and grounded in your goals. For each exercise or activity you choose, include:**

- What kind of activity you plan to do
- Why you want to do it
- When you will do it
- Where you will do it

Start out with realistic activities based on how physically active you are now. Don't expect to go from couch potato to super athlete right away. Regularly review and update your plan and long-term goals so that you can build on your success. You can use a

**Weekly Exercise and Physical Activity Plan** (see page 117) to write down your activities or the

[Move Your Way Activity Planner](#), to personalize your activities.



Watch these [Move Your Way](#) videos (see page 96) for more tips on getting motivated.

Track your progress with before-and-after pictures and measurements, increased weight or reps, or increased ability to do certain activities, like picking up grandkids, unloading groceries, climbing stairs or improving balance.

You can use the **Move Your Way Activity Planner** to build a personalized weekly activity plan and find tips for fitting activity into your daily routine. Go to <https://health.gov/MoveYourWay/Activity-Planner>.



# QUICK TIP

## REWARDS FOR BEING ACTIVE



Don't forget to build rewards into your plan. Maintain a list of rewards to use when specific goals are achieved. Treat yourself to something special: a movie, a trip to the museum, a new audiobook or a massage. Celebrate your successes!



## STAY MOTIVATED TO BE ACTIVE

When it comes to **motivation**, the first few months are crucial. If you can stick with an exercise routine or physical activities you enjoy for at least six months, it's a good sign that you will be able to make exercise and physical activity a regular part of your everyday life.

Once you start being physically active, you will begin to see results in just a few weeks. You'll probably notice signs that you're getting more fit:

- You have more energy and feel stronger.
- Your [overall mood](#) and outlook on life have improved.
- It's easier to do your usual daily activities.
- Climbing a couple of flights of stairs is easier.
- You can do activities faster or for longer than before.
- It's easier to get into and out of a car.
- You can get down on the floor to [play a game with your grandchildren](#) and get back up again more easily when the game is over.
- You're [sleeping](#) better at night.
- You have less [pain](#) when you move around.
- Symptoms of an [ongoing health condition](#) may improve.

This tells you that your body is getting used to a higher level of activity.

## HOW CAN YOU MAKE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY A HABIT?



- **Determine your purpose.**
- **Identify your starting point.**
- **Make a realistic plan. Start small.**
- **Set goals.**
- **Do some physical activity on most days of the week.**
- **Vary your activities. Increase your effort over time.**
- **Track your progress.**

# QUICK TIP:

HITTING THE GYM



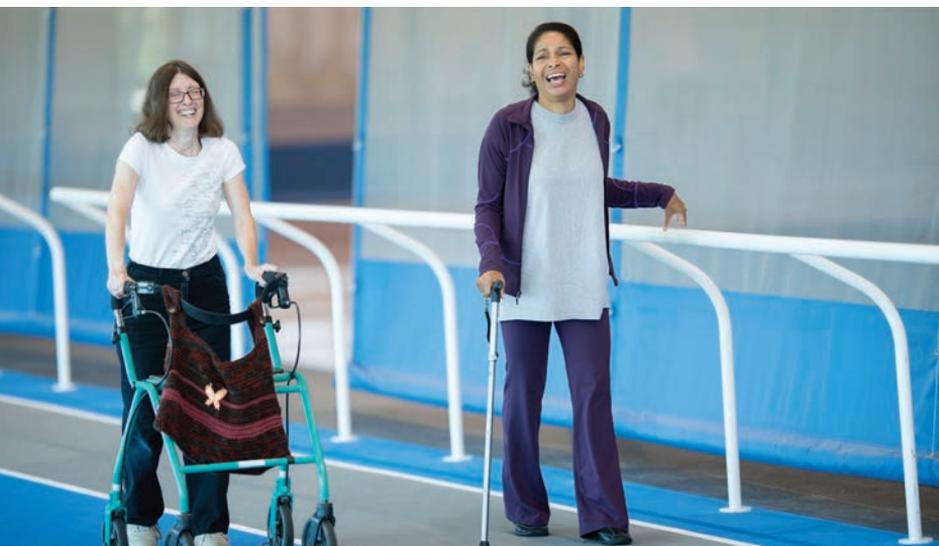
Some people find that going to a gym regularly or working with a fitness trainer helps them stay motivated.

When you see signs that your fitness is improving, it's time to build on those benefits by doing more. Keep your starting point in mind, though. For some people, switching from one- to two-pound weights is a big step forward. For others, building up to walking briskly or even running is a reasonable goal.



**No matter your starting point:**

- **Add new physical activities.** Be creative and try some new activities that will keep your interest!
- Sign up for dance lessons. Talk to your friends about bowling together once a week. Join a water aerobics class. Save gas by walking to your nearby grocery store. Can you trade in your self-propelled lawn mower for a push mower?



**Having fun and socializing are major reasons why Sylvia exercises.**

“Once I retired two years ago, I started a walking club with my friends to stay connected and active. We get together three times a week to walk in the park or at the local Y. We count our laps and keep a record of our progress. We help each other set exercise goals to work toward and stay on track. They help me stay motivated and I have fun.”

- **Review your goals.** As your body gets used to a level of exercise, you’ll need to vary your exercise or do more physical activity in order to see additional progress. If you are able, do your activities longer, farther or harder. If you walk 30 minutes at lunch time every day, increase it to 40 minutes. If you only have 30 minutes for lunch, pick up the pace so you’re walking faster and farther in the same amount of time. Try using a step counter, pedometer or wearable activity tracker to track your progress. Seeing the number of steps add up can be great motivation. If you usually swim half a mile, build up to three-quarters of a mile.

Use a stronger resistance band when you do strength exercises. Set small, realistic goals, check your progress and reward yourself when you reach your goal.

- **Do the activities more often.**

Spend time in your garden more often. Head over to the gym three times a week instead of two. Walk for exercise every day.

Physical activity is a great way to have fun safely, be with friends and family, enjoy the outdoors, improve your fitness for your favorite sport and maintain your independence. You also gain substantial and sustainable health benefits from regular physical activity. The best way to be physically active is to make it a lifelong habit. Find something you enjoy doing, include it in your regular routine and try to increase your level of activity over time.

Once you get started, keep going!

## STICKING WITH IT:

# WHAT WORKS?

**You're more likely to stay active if you:**

- **Think you will benefit from your activities**
- **Include activities you enjoy**
- **Feel you can do the activities correctly**
- **Believe the activities are safe**
- **Have regular access to the activities**
- **Can fit the activities into your daily schedule**
- **Find that the activities are affordable**
- **Can see the benefits of regular exercise and physical activity**



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CHAPTER 5

# KEEP GOING

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## RESOURCES

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Local fitness centers or hospitals might be able to help you find a physical activity program that works for you. You also can check with local religious groups, senior and civic centers, recreation associations, parks, YMCAs, YWCAs, Jewish Community Centers, public libraries or even area shopping malls for exercise, wellness or walking programs.



The National Institute on Aging offers free information about health and aging in English and Spanish.

### **National Institute on Aging Information Center**

800-222-2225 (toll free) | 800-222-4225 (TTY/toll free)

[niaic@nia.nih.gov](mailto:niaic@nia.nih.gov) | [www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov)

Visit [www.nia.nih.gov/health](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health) to find more health and aging information from NIA and subscribe to email alerts.

Visit <https://order.nia.nih.gov> to order free print publications.

Looking for more information on how to begin an exercise plan and keep going? Visit the National Institute on Aging website at [www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity) for exercise examples, tracking worksheets and tips to help you stay motivated. Also, check out these videos on the National Institute on Aging YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/user/NatlInstituteOnAging](http://www.youtube.com/user/NatlInstituteOnAging).

**[10-minute Sample Workout for Older Adults](#)**

**[15-minute Sample Workout for Older Adults](#)**

**[Bicycle Safety Tips](#)**

**[Choosing the Right Fitness Shoes and Clothes](#)**

**[Exercise Safely Outdoors](#)**

**[Exercising Safely in Cold Weather](#)**

**[Exercising Safely in Hot Weather](#)**

**[How to Stay Safe While Doing 4 Types of Exercise](#)**

**The following resources also have information about physical activity and exercise for older adults:**

## **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES**

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### **Administration for Community Living**

202-401-4634 | [www.acl.gov](http://www.acl.gov)

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

800-232-4636 (toll free) | 888-232-6348 (TTY/toll free)  
[cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov) | [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

### **How to Avoid Portion Size Pitfalls to Help Manage Your Weight**

### **Mall Walking: A Program Resource Guide**

### **Physical Activity for Arthritis**

### **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services**

800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227) (toll free)  
877-486-2048 (TTY/toll free) | [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)

### **Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Information Center**

301-504-5414 | [www.nal.usda.gov/fnic](http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic)

### **Dietary Guidelines for Americans**

### **Educational Materials for Older Adults**

### **MyPlate**

### **USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs**

**Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration Office of Safety**  
202-366-8568 | <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov>

**Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety**

**Federal Trade Commission**

877-382-4357 (toll free) | [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

**Tips for Buying Exercise Equipment**



**Food and Drug Administration  
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition**

888-723-3366 (toll free) | [www.fda.gov/food/resources-you-food/industry-and-consumer-assistance-cfsan](http://www.fda.gov/food/resources-you-food/industry-and-consumer-assistance-cfsan)

**Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion**

240-453-8280 | [www.health.gov](http://www.health.gov)

**Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans**

**Move Your Way**

**Activity Planner**

Search YouTube for these videos: **Move Your Way: Tips for Getting Motivated** and **Move Your Way: Tips for Busy Days**.

**President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition**

240-276-9567 | [www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov)

# NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RESOURCES

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## **MedlinePlus National Library of Medicine**

[www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov)

Search **“Health Topics”** for exercise and fitness information.

## **National Cancer Institute**

800-4-CANCER (800-422-6237; toll free) | [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

### **Physical Activity and Cancer**

## **National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health**

888-644-6226 (toll free) | [www.nccih.nih.gov](http://www.nccih.nih.gov)

### **Tai Chi and Qi Gong**

## **National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute**

877-645-2448 (toll free) | [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

### **Physical Activity and Your Heart**

### **Portion Distortion**

## **National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases**

877-226-4267 (toll free) | [www.niams.nih.gov](http://www.niams.nih.gov)

### **Exercise for Your Bone Health**

## **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases**

800-860-8747 (toll free) | [www.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.niddk.nih.gov)

### **Diabetes**

[www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes](http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes)

### **Diabetes Diet, Eating, & Physical Activity**

#### **Health Tips for Older Adults**

#### **Stay Fit as You Mature**

#### **Staying Active at Any Size**

#### **Walking: A Step in the Right Direction**

### **Office of Dietary Supplements**

301-435-2920 | [www.ods.od.nih.gov](http://www.ods.od.nih.gov)

### **Dietary Supplement Fact Sheets**



# NON-FEDERAL RESOURCES

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## **American Academy of Family Physicians**

800-274-2237 (toll free) | [www.familydoctor.org](http://www.familydoctor.org)

### **Exercise and Seniors**

## **American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons**

847-823-7186 | [www.aaos.org](http://www.aaos.org)

### **Seniors and Exercise**

### **Seniors and Exercise: Starting an Exercise Program**

## **American College of Sports Medicine**

317-637-9200 | [www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org)

## **American Council on Exercise**

888-825-3636 (toll free) | [www.acefitness.org](http://www.acefitness.org)

## **American Heart Association**

800-242-8721 (toll free) | [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

### **Healthy for Good™**

## **American Physical Therapy Association**

800-999-2782 (toll free) | [www.choosept.com](http://www.choosept.com)

## **American Podiatric Medical Association**

301-581-9200 | [www.apma.org](http://www.apma.org)

## **Arthritis Foundation**

800-283-7800 (toll free) | [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)

## **Walk with Ease Program**

## **Institute for Credentialing Excellence**

202-367-1165 | [www.credentialingexcellence.org](http://www.credentialingexcellence.org)

## **International Council on Active Aging**

866-335-9777 (toll free) | [www.icaa.cc](http://www.icaa.cc)

## **National Council on Aging**

571-527-3900 | [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org)

## **BenefitsCheckUp®**

## **Center for Healthy Aging**

## **Evidence-Based Falls Prevention Programs**

## **Fit & Strong!**

## **Geri-Fit**

## **Healthy Moves**

## **SilverSneakers**

866-584-7389 (toll free) | [www.silversneakers.com](http://www.silversneakers.com)

## **YMCA**

800-872-9622 (toll free) | [www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net)

## **Enhance® Fitness**

## **Moving for Better Balance**

## **YWCA USA**

202-467-0801 | [www.ywca.org](http://www.ywca.org)



## WORKSHEETS

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On the following pages, you will find worksheets that you can use to help meet your exercise and physical activity goals. Choose and use the ones that work for you.

YOU ALSO CAN FIND THESE WORKSHEETS AT  
[WWW.NIA.NIH.GOV/HEALTH/EXERCISE-PHYSICAL-ACTIVITY.](http://WWW.NIA.NIH.GOV/HEALTH/EXERCISE-PHYSICAL-ACTIVITY)



# QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT GETTING READY TO EXERCISE

Answer these questions to assess how active you are now and why you want to become more active.

1. Am I currently exercising on a regular basis?

Yes       No

2. How much time do I spend sitting each day?

3. How much time am I active and how often each week?

4. When I'm active, what kinds of activities am I doing?

5. What motivated or would motivate me to start exercising?

**Check all that apply:**

- To become more physically fit
- To help prevent future health problems
- To reduce stress
- To manage a chronic condition, like heart disease or diabetes
- To spend time with friends and family or make new friends
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_





## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT

# MAKING REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY A HABIT

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1. The following is one type of exercise or physical activity that will be easy for me to start with, or easy for me to do more of.
2. What results do I hope to get from this new or increased exercise/activity?
3. To start off, how many times a week can I easily do this new or increased exercise/activity?
4. To start off, how long will each exercise/activity session be?
5. Where are the easiest places for me to do this exercise/activity?



**6.** Will I exercise alone, with a trainer, with a buddy or in a class?

**7.** To vary my routine, what other exercises/activities will I gradually add?

**8.** What is one way I will increase my effort over time?

**9.** If I have to stop exercising for any reason, how will I make sure I start again? (See page 42 for tips on starting to exercise again after a break.)

**10.** When will I begin moving more? Today? Tomorrow? Next week?

# QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES

Here are 35 common everyday activities. **Circle 10** that are important to you and that you want to make sure you can continue to do as you age.

## ENDURANCE

1. Keep up with my grandchildren during a trip to the park
2. Walk uphill or upstairs and not get out of breath
3. Have enough energy to go out with friends
4. Rake leaves
5. Shovel snow
6. Take a walk without having to stop and rest
7. Vacuum the house
8. Play a sport like tennis
9. Dance

## STRENGTH

10. Carry groceries
11. Carry a laundry basket full of clothes
12. Get up out of a chair with ease
13. Climb stairs
14. Open a jar
15. Lift a young grandchild or a pet
16. Get out of the shower or tub safely
17. Get in and out of a car easily
18. Pull open a door





## BALANCE

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19. Walk on an uneven sidewalk without falling
20. Avoid falling if I happen to stumble
21. Safely stand on tiptoe to reach a high shelf
22. Avoid falling if I'm jostled
23. Go up and down stairs
24. Feel steady on my feet when standing still
25. Avoid falling if I bend down to pick up something

## FLEXIBILITY

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26. Bend down to pick up what I dropped
27. Look over my shoulder when I back up my car
28. Reach from the front to back seat of the car
29. Make the bed
30. Put on a coat
31. Bend over to put on socks or tie shoes
32. Feel less stiff when I get out of bed
33. Get down on the floor with my grandkids
34. Button a shirt or blouse
35. Get on my knees to garden

Choose a physical activity from each of the exercise categories above to develop your own plan. Write your plan in the box below.



# QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR EXERCISE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BARRIERS

Chances are, you know you should be more active, but find it hard to fit exercise and physical activity into your life. So many things, or barriers, can get in the way of being active.

What barriers keep me from starting or continuing to be active on a regular basis? **(Select all that apply.)**

I do not have enough time to exercise.

I fear being injured or have been injured recently.

I do not find exercising to be convenient.

I do not have barriers to overcome.

I am not motivated to exercise.

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

I do not enjoy exercising.

I do not live close to or have access to parks, sidewalks, bicycle trails or safe walking paths.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are three strategies I could use to overcome these barriers?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





## ACTIVITY LOG

# FIND YOUR STARTING POINT

For a couple of weekdays and a weekend, write down how much time you are physically active (for example: walking, gardening, playing a sport, dancing, lifting weights). The goal is to find ways to increase your activity.

	Activity	# of Minutes	Ways to Increase Activity
Weekday 1			

**Total Minutes** \_\_\_\_\_

Weekday 2			

**Total Minutes** \_\_\_\_\_

Weekend			

**Total Minutes** \_\_\_\_\_





## ACTIVITY LOG

# MONTHLY PROGRESS TEST

Take the tests, record your scores, and watch your progress.

Activity Type	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<b>Endurance</b> Pick a fixed course, such as the distance from your house to the corner, and see how long it takes you to walk that far.						
<b>Upper-Body Strength</b> Count the number of arm curls you can do safely in 2 minutes.						
<b>Lower-Body Strength</b> Count the number of chair stands you can do safely in 2 minutes.						



## ACTIVITY LOG

# MONTHLY PROGRESS TEST (CONTINUED)

Activity Type	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Endurance</b> Pick a fixed course, such as the distance from your house to the corner, and see how long it takes you to walk that far.						
<b>Upper-Body Strength</b> Count the number of arm curls you can do safely in 2 minutes.						
<b>Lower-Body Strength</b> Count the number of chair stands you can do safely in 2 minutes.						



Activity Type	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<b>Balance</b> Time yourself as you stand on one foot, without support, for as long as possible. Repeat with the other foot.						

<b>Flexibility</b> Note how far you can reach toward your toes until you feel a stretch.						
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Activity Type	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Balance</b> Time yourself as you stand on one foot, without support, for as long as possible. Repeat with the other foot.						

<b>Flexibility</b> Note how far you can reach toward your toes until you feel a stretch.						
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# WEEKLY EXERCISE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLAN

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Use this form to make your own exercise and physical activity plan — one you think you really can manage. Update your plan as you progress. Aim for moderate-intensity endurance activities on most or all days of the week.

**Try to do strength exercises for all of your major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week, but don't exercise the same muscle group 2 days in a row.**

For example, do upper-body strength exercises on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and lower-body strength exercises on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Or, you can do strength exercises of all your muscle groups every other day. Don't forget to include balance and flexibility exercises.

Week of \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Type	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
Endurance							
Upper-Body Strength							
Lower-Body Strength							
Balance							
Flexibility							





# GOAL-SETTING WORKSHEET

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**Your success depends on setting goals that really matter to you. Write down your goals, put them where you can see them, and renew them regularly. Describe how you will reward yourself for achieving each goal.**

## Short-Term Goals

Write down at least two of your own personal short-term goals. What will you do over the next week or two that will help you make physical activity a regular part of your life?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Reward** \_\_\_\_\_

## Long-Term Goals

Write down at least two long-term goals. Focus on where you want to be in 6 months, a year, or 2 years from now. Remember, setting goals will help you make physical activity part of your everyday life, monitor your progress, and celebrate your success.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Reward** \_\_\_\_\_











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