

Physical activity basics



Physical readiness quiz

Before beginning any fitness program, it's important to consider the following questions. If you answer "yes" to any of them, please check with your physician before starting a fitness program.

- Has your physician ever told you that you have a heart problem of any kind?
- Do you have chest pain brought about by physical activity?
- Do you have fainting spells or extreme dizziness?
- Have you had chest pain within the past month?
- Do you have a bone or joint problem that is aggravated by physical activity?
- Are you aware of any problems that might make exercise harmful to your health?

Exercise Q & A

You may have questions about physical activity that you want answered before starting a program. Here are answers to some common questions to help you get started:

How often should I exercise? You should work up to exercising most days of the week. At the minimum, each week should include three days of aerobics (walking, swimming, biking or jogging) and two days of strength training, with proper stretching done daily.

How long should I exercise? Do whatever you can fit into your schedule. For weight loss, exercise at least 30 minutes. You also can accumulate these minutes, with 15 in the morning and 15 at night.

How hard should I exercise? If you are healthy, you can work towards raising your heart rate between 70 and 85 percent of its maximum. Your maximum heart rate is figured by subtracting your age from 220. If you're more than 30 pounds over your weight goal, consult your physician before exercising at the higher intensity.

If I've never exercised before, where do I start? Start slowly and gradually increase duration and intensity. Check with your physician and start with what feels comfortable.



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Physical activity basics *continued*



What kind of physical activity should I do? Whatever you'll stick with. Make sure you choose a program that you enjoy like swimming, playing tennis or jogging.

What if I'm pregnant? Physical activity is great when you're pregnant. It can help reduce back pain, increase energy, improve your digestion and may help you have an easier delivery. Ask your physician about what type of program would be best for you.

What is the foundation of a good fitness program? The main components are aerobic activities, strength training and flexibility exercises.

How many calories will I burn when I exercise? That depends on how much you weigh and your intensity level. The higher your weight, the more calories you will burn. The lighter the weight, the lower the calories burned. Following are the calorie amounts a 150-pound person could expect to burn per hour:

- Bicycling (410)
- Jogging (740)
- Jumping rope (750)
- Swimming (275)
- Playing tennis (400)
- Walking (320)

Add fitness to your day

It may be challenging to add a formal physical activity program to your day, but you can easily add these simple "lifestyle" activities:

- Park farther away and walk briskly to your destination
- Use the stairs rather than the elevator
- Do your own yard work
- Dine at home, go bowling, skating or dancing rather than eating out
- Talk to people face-to-face instead of using the phone or e-mail, whenever possible
- Walk during your morning and afternoon breaks
- Turn chores at home into exercise, like vacuuming, washing windows or dusting
- Play with the kids, walk the dog, hide the remote control, trade computer time for activity time and bypass drive-through windows

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