

# All About Physical Activity

## What can physical activity do for me?

Physical activity

- helps keep your blood glucose (sugar), blood pressure, HDL cholesterol, and triglycerides on target
- lowers your risk for prediabetes, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke
- relieves stress
- strengthens your heart, muscles, and bones
- improves your blood circulation and tones your muscles
- keeps your body and your joints flexible

Even if you've never exercised before, you can find ways to add physical activity to your day. You'll get benefits, even if your activities aren't strenuous. **Once physical activity is a part of your routine, you'll wonder how you did without it.**

## If I haven't been very active lately, what should I do first?

If you have health problems, start with a check up from your health care provider. Your provider can recommend physical activities that will help you but won't make your conditions worse.

## What kinds of physical activity are best?

A complete physical activity routine includes 3 different kinds of activities:

1. activity—walking, using the stairs, moving around—throughout the day
2. aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, swimming, or dancing
3. strength training, such as lifting light weights



Find an activity you enjoy, such as a strength training class.

## Being active throughout the day

Being active helps burn calories. Get up and move every 90 minutes if you sit for long periods of time. Place a check mark next to the things you'd like to try:

- Walk instead of drive whenever possible.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walk around while you talk on the phone.
- Work in the garden, rake leaves, or wash the car.
- Play with the kids.
- Carry things upstairs in two trips instead of one.
- Park at the far end of the shopping center lot and walk to the store.
- Others things I can do:

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### Aerobic exercise

Aerobic exercise makes your heart and bones strong, relieves stress, and improves blood circulation. It also lowers your risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke by keeping your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels on target.

Aim for about 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week. If you haven't been very active recently, start out with 5 or 10 minutes a day. Then work up to more time each week. Or split up your activity for the day—try a brisk 10-minute walk 3 times each day. If you're trying to lose weight, you may want to aim for more than 30 minutes a day.

Here are some ways to get aerobic exercise:

- Take a brisk walk every day.
- Go dancing or take a dance aerobics class.
- Swim or do water aerobics.
- Take a bicycle ride outdoors or use a stationary bicycle indoors.

#### My plan for aerobic exercise:

What I'll do:

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What I need to get ready:

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Which days and times:

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How long each session will be:

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How I'll warm up and cool down for each session:

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### Strength training

Strength training helps build strong bones and muscles and makes everyday chores like carrying groceries easier. With more muscle, you burn more calories, even at rest. Do your strength routine several times a week. Here are some ways to do strength training:

- Lift light weights at home.
- Join a class that uses weights, elastic bands, or plastic tubes.
- When you travel, make time to use the hotel fitness center. Or bring lightweight, easy-to-pack resistance bands with you.

#### My plan for strength training:

What I'll do:

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What I need to get ready:

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Which days and times:

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How long each session will be:

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### How to keep a record of your progress

Keep track of your activity. You might find that writing everything down helps keep you on target. Think about what works best for you. You might try a notebook, calendar, spreadsheet, cell phone, or online activity tracker to log and record your progress.

### How a support system can help

It may be helpful to meet on a regular basis with others who are also trying to be active. Think about joining a group for exercise or general support. Or find a walking buddy. Then work together to reach your goals.



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