

# Being Active for a Better Life

Exercise  
is Medicine®

AMERICAN COLLEGE  
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Did you know that not getting enough physical activity can result in the same kinds of health problems caused by smoking and being overweight? For starters, moving more often:

- Lowers your risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, several kinds of cancer, and weight gain
- Helps keep your mind sharp as you get older and lowers your risk of dementia and Alzheimers
- Improves your mood and sleep
- Slows the effects of aging
- Increases your energy and simply makes life better

Inactive people who start moving get the biggest bang for their buck. Even if you can't be as active as experts say you should, any physical activity is a good thing. The more time you spend sitting, the more you increase your risk of heart problems and death.

Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.

## Getting Started

### Check Your Health

If you have health worries, talk with your health care provider before you start exercising. Make sure they know all the medications you are taking. If you have muscle or joint problems, ask about doing physical therapy before beginning an exercise program.



### Exercise with a Friend

Do activities you enjoy and find a buddy at home or work. Those who exercise with a friend tend to stick with it longer than those who go it alone.



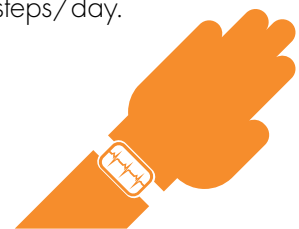
### Start Simple

If you're just starting out, try something simple like walking. All you need is a good pair of shoes!



### Motivation

Use a smart phone or an activity tracker to measure your progress and stay motivated. Count your steps daily for the first week or two. Gradually build up to 7,500-10,000 steps/day.



### To stay safe and injury free:

- Warm up and cool down before and after exercise.
- Start with light to medium effort.
- Gradually increase your pace and time spent being active. Start low and go slow!

# Aerobic Activity



Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing. Build up to doing 150 minutes/week of medium effort activity, 75 minutes/week of challenging activity or a combination of both. You'll improve your stamina and heart health.

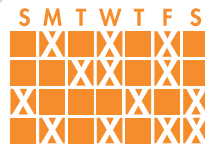
## What?

Any rhythmic, continuous activity!



## How often?

3-5 Days/week



## How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard



## How much?

Start w/5-10 minutes. Gradually build up to 30-60 minutes.



**Remember:** Walking, biking, dancing, swimming and water exercise are great. Fit in 10, 15, 30 minutes whenever you can. It all adds up. To lose weight, do twice as much activity.

# Strength Training



Strength training, for example working with weights or resistance bands, makes you stronger and helps your overall health. Plus, strength training can make daily activities like lifting laundry baskets or yardwork easier and safer.

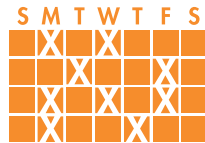
## What?

Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines, or your own body (for example, kitchen counter pushups or chair squats)



## How often?

2-3 Days/week



## How hard?

Start with light effort. Build up to medium or hard effort.



## How much?

10-15 repetitions to start (for each major muscle group) Build up to 8-12 reps of challenging effort. Repeat 2-4 times.



**Remember:** Avoid straining or holding your breath when lifting. If you need it, get help from an experienced personal trainer. They can teach you the right way to do exercises and how to breathe properly.

# Other Types of Physical Activity

- Yoga, Tai Chi and Pilates help with balance, flexibility and strength, and are relaxing too!
- Flexibility: Stretch your muscles 2-7 days/week to the point of feeling tightness. Hold for 10-30 seconds (30-60 seconds for older adults). For example, stretch your calves or the back of your thighs.
- Balance: Exercises may include standing on one foot, walking on a line, or using a balance board. Train in an uncluttered area and use a chair or wall for support if needed.

How will I get started **this week?** \_\_\_\_\_