

Prevention Newsletter

...for the health and well-being of you and your family.



Regular physical activity is vital to good health, and especially important in maintaining or losing weight. Most Americans are well aware of this, yet many remain sedentary. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an astounding 70 percent of adults are not achieving the basic recommendation of at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five days a week. Exercise should not be dismissed as an “if I have the time” option; it needs to be part of every American’s lifestyle.

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Get Active!

People of all ages benefit from physical activity. It doesn't matter how out-of-shape you feel or how long you have been inactive – it is never too late to start aerobic activity. Simply stated, an aerobic activity is one that gets you breathing harder and your heart beating faster. It is also important to fit strength-building activities into your daily routine, in order to make your muscles stronger and prevent osteoporosis.

The Benefits of Physical Activity

Exercise can help control your blood pressure, blood sugar, and weight; help raise your “good” cholesterol; and prevent diseases such as colorectal cancer, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes. Becoming active can also:

- Help you look your best
- Raise self-esteem
- Improve sleep
- Strengthen bones, muscles and joints
- Reduce falls and arthritis pain
- Lower your chances of becoming depressed
- Be fun!

How do I get started?

If you are not that active but want to get there, start by building physical activity into your life slowly. Begin at a comfortable level; once you get the hang of it, add a little more activity each time you exercise. Then, try doing it more often. Remember, any activity is better than no activity – even if you feel that you are not working out as vigorously as you should be, you are still doing your body tremendous good. Make exercise part of your daily routine; you are much more likely to keep up with activity if it becomes second nature.

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What if I have health issues?

If you have a health problem, it is always a good idea to speak to your doctor about what type of activity is best for you. No matter what you may be suffering from, there is always physical activity that you can do which will benefit your health; in fact, it can be a great way to help manage type 2 diabetes or high blood pressure.

How much exercise do I need?

You should do aerobic activity for at least 10 minutes at a time in order to achieve its full benefits. If you choose activities at a moderate level, such as walking fast or yard work, you should aim to get at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of this every week. If you choose vigorous activities, such as swimming laps, jogging, or riding a bike on hills, get at least 1 hour 15 minutes per week. Strengthening activities, such as push-ups, sit-ups, and weightlifting, should be done at least 2 days a week. Focus on your upper body one day and your lower body the next.

I am already working out 2 hours and 30 minutes every week but not seeing a difference. What am I doing wrong?

Remember that the basic principle of losing weight and/or building muscle is to burn more calories than you take in. Make sure you are following a healthy diet of plenty of vegetables, fruits, protein and whole grains. If you are eating healthy foods, try stepping up your workout routine. Choose more vigorous activities, or try increasing your workout time by 30 minutes each week until you can get up to 5 hours or more.

Working out is boring. How can I make it fun?

Try incorporating things you enjoy into your workout routine. Climbing on a treadmill is not the only way to get in shape! You can take the dog for a run, swim laps, go hiking, play videogames that encourage fitness... really, anything that gets your heart beating faster counts as working out! Involve your family in physical activity – play Frisbee, kick around a soccer ball, build a snowman – and you will find that not only did you get a workout in, but time flew by as well!

I'm busy – I don't have the time to work out.

"Not having time" is the oldest excuse in the book. Everyone has time to work out. Try breaking up activity into shorter sessions of 10 minutes at a time. For example, go for a quick walk on your lunch break at work. Or, park far away the next time you go to the store. Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Take your dog for a longer walk than usual. Carry multiple grocery bags into the house instead of one at a time. Do sit-ups or push-ups during commercial breaks while watching your favorite show. There are so many ways to incorporate extra physical activity into your day.

It's easier to get in shape than you think. The next time you are waffling between watching television and working out, set that program to record and get out there! You will be in great shape in no time!

Source: Healthfinder.gov

For more information on how to begin a workout program, how to eat healthier, or both, visit www.healthfinder.gov, www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov, or www.cdc.gov.