

Action plan for increasing physical activity



How to reach your goal of increasing physical activity

- Get moving—every step counts!
- Each week, spend at least 2 ½ hours doing moderate-intensity physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity. It's better to do them over time than all in one or two days
 - Examples of moderate-intensity activity are brisk walking and mowing the lawn with a power mower
 - Examples of vigorous-intensity activity are running and mowing the lawn with a manual mower
- Two or more days per week, do muscle-strengthening activities that involve all major muscle groups
 - Examples of these are lifting hand weights, push ups and even gardening with digging or carrying bags of dirt

What are the benefits?

Many people think being physically active means running a marathon or working out at a gym. But anyone can be more active by making small changes over time.

Prevent or control on-going diseases, such as

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Osteoporosis (bone thinning)
- Depression

Being more active can also help you

- Feel less tired and have more energy
- Reduce stress and improve your mood
- Become stronger
- Keep a healthy weight or lose weight
- Sleep better
- Improve balance and prevent injury

What's stopping you from being more physically active?

Does this sound like you?	Tips to help you succeed
<i>"I don't have enough time to exercise."</i>	Add physical activity to your daily routine. Start with activities that take only a few minutes.
<i>"I don't like to exercise."</i>	Try different activities to find ones you like.
<i>"I'm afraid I'll hurt myself."</i>	Being more active does not mean doing something you can't keep up. Stretch for at least three minutes at the end of all physical activities.

Take the first steps to increasing physical activity.

Choose one or two of the activities listed below. Or write in one of your own.

- Park at the far end of the parking lot at work or at the mall
- Get on or off the bus several blocks away from your stop
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator at work
- Stand up and stretch at your desk a couple of times a day
- Take a 10-minute walk once a day

Notes:

- Play actively with your kids or pets twice a week
- Wash your car by hand instead of taking it to the car wash
- When watching TV, get up during the commercials and walk around the house
- _____

My first activity step: _____
 My start date: _____

Track your progress on the physical activity calendar.

Next steps

1. Add one new step to your plan each week or month, such as:
 - I will walk an extra five minutes during lunch
 - I will stretch for 15 minutes while watching TV
 - I will stand while talking on the phone

2. Gradually increase your activity levels and over time, you'll find that this becomes a healthy habit.

Activity level	How to estimate intensity	Examples
Light	No increase in your breathing and heart rate. You can sing while doing the activity.	Walking slowly, dusting, vacuuming, light stretching, golfing with a cart
Moderate	Your breathing and heart rate increase. You're sweating lightly. You can carry on a conversation comfortably.	Brisk walking, golfing (pulling/carrying clubs), dancing, washing windows, weight lifting
Vigorous	You're breathing heavily and your heart is beating very fast. You're too out of breath to carry on a conversation.	Race walking, jogging, running, swimming laps, bicycling uphill

3. Gradually include activities that strengthen your muscles in all the major muscle groups: legs, hips, back, chest, stomach, shoulders and arms. Examples of these are push-ups, sit-ups and lifting weights or using elastic bands. The exercises for each muscle group should be repeated eight to 12 times per session.

4. Look for ways to add other activities.

Tips for success

- Plan ahead—be ready when it may be harder to follow your physical activity plan (illness, busy at work, vacations, etc.)
- Look for other activities— do something small rather than nothing
- Be realistic! Begin slowly and gradually become more active
- If you spend one day as a couch potato, try to do better the next day
- Stick with it. If what you are doing is not working, try something else
- Find a friend to join you on walks, at the gym, or sign up for a fitness class

Remember, being physically active is a healthy habit that should last a lifetime.

For more information, please visit ama-assn.org/go/healthierlifesteps

Important!

If at any time you feel more than a little discomfort or pain, have difficulty breathing or feel your heart skipping beats, stop the activity immediately. See your doctor if any of these conditions persists.



1 Set your physical activity steps for this month.

Example: Use stairs instead of elevators

2. Use this calendar to put a check on each day that you take a step towards meeting your goal of being more physically active. You can also write in the activities you did.

*Example:
I took the
stairs!*

Month: _____

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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