



Starting an Exercise Plan

Thinking about starting an exercise program? Start by giving yourself a pat on the back. Physical activity can not only help you lose weight, it can reduce your risk of chronic disease, improve your balance and coordination, and even improve your sleep and self-esteem. While the benefits are clear, you may not know how to get started. Here are some tips to help you on your way to a healthier lifestyle.

Create a plan

When it comes to fitness, one size doesn't fit all. You need to have a plan that's right for you. Start by following these basic steps: Assess your fitness level. Record your baseline fitness scores, such as aerobic fitness, muscular fitness, flexibility, and body composition. Your healthcare professional can help you.

- Set clear goals. Do you want to lose weight? Or do you have another motivation, such as preparing for a 5K race?
- Consider your strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. The more you enjoy it, the more you'll do it.
- Think about how you can build activity into your daily routine.

Understand the basics of exercise

There are three basic components that go into a healthy fitness plan: aerobic activity, strength training, and stretching.

- Aerobic activity. Any time you are active, your body needs additional energy. This is obtained from two sources: carbohydrates and stored fat. The key to losing weight is to draw on the fat rather than on the carbohydrate reserves by doing longer, lower intensity aerobic activity. For example, a 30-minute brisk walk will burn more fat and a 100-yard sprint.
- Strength training. This is a type of resistance exercise that helps improve muscle tone and burn fat. The exercises are repeated over time until they become comfortable.
- Stretching. It's easy to forget this important step in your fitness routine, but don't. Proper stretching during and after a workout can help increase flexibility and range of motion in your joints, improve circulation, enhance coordination, improve posture, and relieve stress.

Some simple rules for success

- Always start out slow and gradually increase your level of activity. You don't want to injure yourself or burn out too quickly.
- Vary your routine. You're more likely to stick with it if you're not bored.
- Make it work for your lifestyle. Finding time to exercise is one of the biggest hurdles. Try watching TV while pedaling a stationary bike or simply marching in place. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, etc.
- Above all, listen to your body. Watch for warning signs like pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, or nausea. And take it easy.

Make massage an enjoyable part of your wellness plan

Therapeutic massage is an effective and increasingly popular healthcare alternative. Along with a healthy diet, clean water, fresh air, and exercise, massage is an essential element in maintaining good health.

Massage can:

- Reduce blood pressure and stress
- Strengthen the immune system
- Increase circulation
- Alleviate pain
- Promote good posture and alignment
- Speed healing and rehabilitation
- Soothe and energize the body, mind, and spirit