



# Regular

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## physical activity

### Why should I increase my level of physical activity?

Everyone can benefit from regular physical activity. The National Physical Activity Guidelines recommend a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week plus being as active throughout your day as possible.

This guide will show you how to start. The challenge starts today.

### Benefits

#### Some of the benefits of exercise include:

- Reduced weight and body fat
- Reduced stress and tension
- Increased energy levels
- Improved sleep
- Stronger bones
- Improved quality of life
- Opportunities for new social contacts and friends
- Reduced risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and heart disease
- Lowered blood fats and blood pressure

### Before you start

No matter what your age, gender or fitness level may be, it is important to follow the important points below to ensure your exercise will be safe, effective and enjoyable.

#### Safety tips for exercise include:

- Discuss your exercise plans with your doctor before starting an exercise program
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes
- Always start with a warm up
- Don't exercise too hard, you should be able to speak comfortably, breathing just a little more frequently
- Slow down gradually after exercising, don't just suddenly stop
- Finish with some gentle stretching
- Drink plenty of water
- Protect yourself from the sun
- Do not exercise after consuming alcohol or if you are feeling unwell
- Start out slowly. Choose an activity or sport that suits your ability at the level that suits your skills and fitness level
- If you feel pain or breathless STOP and see your doctor before continuing



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### How hard should I exercise?

When you are exercising you should think to yourself, how does my body feel? How hard are my lungs, heart and muscles working? Rate the level of how hard YOU think you are exercising, especially in the beginning this should be light, working through the levels.

#### **Resting**

This is the level when your body is not moving, you should try to limit the amount of time you sit down throughout the day as much as possible, and get up and move at least every 30 minutes.

#### **Very, very light movement**

This may be doing craft, tapping your foot to music, or simply scratching your head.

#### **Very light activity**

Most daily activities place you at this level (washing the dishes, pegging out washing, cooking dinner and gentle stretching exercises). You should aim to be as active in as many ways as you can.

#### **Light**

This is the level you should start all your exercise sessions to warm at your muscles and joints and allow your heart and lungs to adjust slowly. You should also cool down at this level at the end of your exercise session, don't suddenly stop.

#### **Moderate intensity**

Work up to this level gradually, at this level the activity should be increasing your heart rate and making you breath more frequently, and may make you sweat lightly, but it shouldn't make you puff and you should be able to talk comfortably. Try to accumulate at least 30 minutes on most, preferably all days of the week, or more if weight loss is desired.

#### **Vigorous**

Vigorous exercise will make you huff and puff. You should check with your doctor before carrying out vigorous activity if you are currently inactive, you have heart disease or have other major health problems, or a close relative had heart disease. If you are pregnant or have any reason to believe you may be pregnant vigorous activity should be only done under strict medical supervision. If you can it can be included for extra health benefits for 30 minutes or more 3-4 days per week.

#### **Too Hard**

Ease off, you will not get any extra health benefits for exercising this hard, you may even be causing damage!

#### **Maximal**

AVOID !!!!!



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### Getting Started

**Goal: be more active (increase your incidental activity in as many ways as you can)**

Think of a movement as an opportunity not an inconvenience, and make it part of your day:

- If you travel by car, bus or train, stop short of your destination and walk the rest of the distance, take the parking space further away.
- Walk to the shops (or part of the way) instead of taking transport. Reserve the ride for when you are loaded up with groceries.
- Take the stairs instead of the lift.
- Make the most of your lunchtime and carry out a short physical activity session such as a walk.
- Stand up when possible, like when talking on the phone.
- Keep moving whenever possible.
- Do seated exercises at work or in front of the television.
- Drink more water so you need to walk to the bathroom more often.

### Weeks 1 & 2

**Goal: for the first two weeks be active for at least 10 minutes at a time, five days per week**

- Choose any activity you like. Low-impact aerobic exercises are best. Some examples are: walking, cycling, dancing, or tennis. Water based exercise or exercising in a chair is very beneficial if you have difficulty walking.
- Remember all the safety tips mentioned previously.
- Start slowly and go at your own pace. If you can't do 10 minutes in one go, try 5 and work your way up.

### Weeks 3 & 4

**Goal: for the next two weeks be active for at least 10 minutes at a time, two days per week as well as 20 minutes at a time, three days per week**

- Warm up and stretches don't count as part of the 20 minutes: but are important now more than ever.
- If you want to exercise with a group, contact your local community health centre, gym or club to find out what programs they have.

### Weeks 5 & 6

**Goal: for the next two weeks be active for at least 20 minutes at a time, two days per week as well as 30 minutes at a time, three days per week**

- Work up to 30 minutes gradually, increasing duration before intensity.
- Try doing a number of different activities to give you variety. It all adds up.

### Weeks 7 & 8

**Goal: for the next two weeks be active for at least 30 minutes at a time, five days per week and don't forget your incidental activities.**

- This is the recommended level of activity for all Australians for good health throughout life.
- If weight loss is desired, more activity may be required.



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### Congratulations! Keep it Up!

You've made it through and proven to yourself (and others) you can do it. Starting is the hardest part and you have succeeded.

You should also be feeling better for your efforts. Hopefully you are enjoying and looking forward to exercise.

To obtain real benefit from exercise you need to continue exercising throughout your life, and you need to enjoy a healthy balanced diet. Don't give up, benefits take time.

Join a group or team, to keep you motivated, Hopefully your enthusiasm has rubbed off on your family and friends and they are joining you too and you can help each other to continue.

### If you are still finding it hard to get active?

If you are finding more excuses not to exercise than reasons to do it, you're not alone. Read on and you'll find there is a solution to most problems.

#### I'm too busy

Think of exercise as an opportunity to have some time for yourself or choose an activity that the family can do together.

#### I get enough exercise just running around

People often believe that their energy output is much greater than it actually is. While "running around" doing the day's activities will help your overall health, when trying to lose body fat it is important to aim for more than 30 minutes of moderate activity on all days of the week. Wear a pedometer (step counter) and see how active you really are.

#### I'm too old

Age should not be a barrier to being healthy as long as you set realistic goals for physical activity. Actually it is more important now than ever to maintain your independence. If you do not want to exercise on your own, join one of the many physical activity groups designed to meet the needs of seniors.

#### I can't walk

With the right instruction, exercises can be safely conducted from a chair or in water so lack of mobility need not pose a problem. These exercises can help build strength and confidence.



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### I get bored

Choose an activity (or several) which you like. Exercise with a group and turn it into a social occasion. It's amazing the influence other members of the group can have to inspire you.

### I can't afford it

There are so many low-cost activities to choose from. Starting a walking program for example will cost you nothing except the cost of a suitable pair of shoes and loose fitting clothing.

### I'm too tired

Regular exercise actually increases your energy levels over time. You'll sleep better as well.

## On a final note

Exercise at your own level: follow the sheet for guidance.

Follow the safety tips at all times

If you have any concerns about starting an exercise program, see your doctor and/or an exercise specialist.