

The Importance of Physical Activity

So Many Reasons to Get Going!

Along with eating healthfully, physical activity is integral to weight management. Research has shown that physical activity helps you to lose weight and keep it off. Not only does it [burn calories](#) but there are numerous other advantages of a physically active lifestyle ...

- Helps regulate the appetite
- Helps to boost metabolism
- Reduces stress
- May help with insomnia
- Is associated with a decreased risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, Osteoporosis

[See Number of Calories Burned During Specific Activities](#)

What's Considered Physical Activity?

Physical activity is not always about spending hours at the gym. There are many ways to become more physically active.

Every Day Activities

- Take the stairs.
- Park at the far end of the parking lot.
- Take a walk at lunch time.
- Walk to the store instead of driving.
- Get up to change the TV channel.

Don't be fooled. The calories burned by being more active in your daily routine will add up.

Recreational Activities

- Enjoy activity with your friends and family: cycling, bowling, gardening, dancing.
- Join a group to enjoy your favorite activity like a cycling club or swim team.
- One-two-cha-cha. Maybe now is the time to join that dance class you've always planned to take.

Working Out

An ideal exercise program includes aerobic exercise, strength training, and flexibility exercises. A good goal is to work up to exercising 4 to 6 times a week for at least 30 to 60 minutes each time.

- **Aerobic Exercise** burns calories and strengthens the cardiovascular system.
 - **Why?** Elevates heart rate for a sustained period of time.
 - **How?** Walking, swimming, bicycling, rowing, running, and aerobics classes.
 - **How Fast?** Exercise at intensity where you are able to talk but not sing, and ... sweat a little.

NOTE: Start slowly – you may only be able to do 5 to 10 minutes at first. If you are over 35, and have been inactive, see your physician before beginning an exercise program.

- **Strength Training** strengthens muscles, increases lean body mass, and helps to strengthen bones.
 - **How?** Calisthenics and weight lifting with free weights, resistance bands, and weight machines.
 - **How Often?** Should be done 2-3 times per week. The same muscle group should not be worked on consecutive days.
 - **Rate?** Start slowly, with lighter weights.
- **Flexibility Exercise** (stretching) keeps muscles flexible and joints healthy.

- **When?** Should be done before and after aerobic and strength training exercise, targeting the muscles used.
- **How Often?** Can be done every day to maintain overall flexibility.

NOTE: Yoga and tai chi also help to maintain flexibility