

EXERCISE GUIDELINES

Consult your doctor before beginning any exercise program. These materials are not intended to be used for the diagnosis or treatment of a health problem or as a substitute for consulting a licensed medical professional.

ADOLESCENTS

Ages 11–17

ADULTS

Ages 18–64

OLDER ADULTS

Ages 65 and older

PREGNANT & POSTPARTUM WOMEN

Remember to stretch every time you exercise, or at least 3 times per week.

CARDIO EXERCISE

5-7 DAYS PER WEEK



Aerobic activity at either moderate intensity* or vigorous intensity**; with at least 3 days each week of vigorous-intensity** activity.

ACTIVITY EXAMPLES



Moderate-intensity: Skateboarding, bicycling or walking to school.



Vigorous-intensity: Jumping rope or playing sports (i.e., soccer, basketball or ice/field hockey).

5 DAYS PER WEEK



Moderate-intensity* activity
OR
Vigorous-intensity** activity

INCREASE FOR ADDITIONAL HEALTH BENEFITS



Moderate-intensity* activity
OR
Vigorous-intensity** activity



Increase activity to help lose weight or maintain weight loss.

ACTIVITY EXAMPLES



Moderate-intensity: Raking leaves, playing golf, biking or car washing.



Vigorous-intensity: Playing sports, climbing stairs or walking uphill.

If you can't do this much, try to fit in 10 minute chunks of activity throughout your day. Every minute counts!

FOLLOW THE ADULT GUIDELINES

If there are limitations due to chronic conditions, avoid being inactive and be as physically active as your abilities allow.

ACTIVITY EXAMPLES



Moderate-intensity: Ballroom dancing, brisk walking or water aerobics.



Vigorous-intensity: Hiking or climbing stairs.

TALK WITH YOUR OBSTETRICIAN about recommended activity levels throughout your pregnancy and whether adjustments are needed to your exercise plan.

5 DAYS PER WEEK



Healthy women should participate in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity cardio activity.

Women who regularly engage in vigorous-intensity cardio activity can continue this activity provided their health during pregnancy remains unchanged.

ACTIVITY EXAMPLES



Moderate-intensity: Swimming or brisk walking.



Vigorous-intensity: Stationary bicycling. Pregnant women should avoid activities that involve lying on the back or that pose a risk of falling or abdominal injury.

STRENGTH EXERCISE

3 DAYS PER WEEK

Structured around light resistance, controlled movement and proper technique to minimize risk of injury.

ACTIVITY EXAMPLES



Muscle-strengthening: Gymnastics or rope climbing.

2-3 DAYS PER WEEK

8–10 strength training exercises with 8–12 repetitions of each exercise (with at least one day of rest in between).

Include exercises for all major muscle groups.

ACTIVITY EXAMPLES



Muscle-strengthening: Sit-ups or push-ups.

FOLLOW THE ADULT GUIDELINES as much as your abilities will allow

Do exercises that maintain or improve your balance, strengthen your core and increase your flexibility.

ACTIVITY EXAMPLES



Muscle-strengthening: Walking backwards or on your toes, Tai Chi (a form of martial arts).

CONSULT WITH YOUR DOCTOR to determine appropriate regimen

Correct form when strength training is very important.

ACTIVITY EXAMPLES



Muscle-strengthening: Light yoga or lifting weights.

Adolescents and adults with disabilities should work with their health care provider to identify the types and amounts of physical activity appropriate for them. Whenever possible, adolescents and adults with disabilities should meet the physical activity guidelines for their age group or participate in as much activity as their condition allows.

On a scale of 0–10, with 0 equaling inactivity or rest and 10 equaling maximum effort: *moderate-intensity refers to activity that is usually performed at a 5 or 6 level of effort. **vigorous-intensity refers to activity that is usually performed at a 7 or 8 level of effort.

SOURCES

- 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf>
- Strength Training: OK for Kids? Mayo Clinic. Available at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/strength-training/HQ01010>

- Physical Activity and Public Health: Updated Recommendations for Adults from the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association (2007). Available at http://www.acsm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home_Page&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=7788



Exercise Safety Tips for Beginners

Ready, Set, Exercise!

-- By Dean Anderson, Fitness Expert

Congratulations! You've made the decision to incorporate regular exercise into your healthy lifestyle, and take advantage of the its numerous benefits. Smart move.

But like many good things, exercise can also be risky—especially if it's been a while since you've worked up a sweat, or if you have any health conditions (including obesity) that could increase your risk of injury. So, it's important to know how to keep yourself safe, and avoid potential problems before they happen. The following information should help you do exactly that.

Before You Start: Safety Precautions

If you are planning to increase your physical activity or start an exercise program, you start with a sedentary activity—answering a few short questions, that is. The PAR-Q (Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire) is the gold standard in fitness safety, used by doctors, trainers and health clubs the world over. Usually comprised of 5-7 questions, it can help rule out any underlying health concerns that could worsen with exercise. Answer yes or no to the following questions.

1. Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition *and* that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?
2. Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?
3. In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?
4. Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?
5. Do you have a bone or joint problem (for example, back, knee, or hip) that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?
6. Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs (for example, water pills) for your blood pressure or heart condition?
7. Do you know of any other reason why you should not do physical activity?

If you answer **YES** to *any* of the questions on this list, you **must check in with your doctor and get cleared for exercise before you start**. You can download or print a copy of the official PAR-Q form for your records, courtesy of the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) by [clicking here](#). (This is a PDF document and you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to open it.)

Likewise, if you have any chronic medical conditions (such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or arthritis) or risk factors (such as smoking or being more than 20 pounds overweight), and have not discussed exercising with your doctor, you should do so before beginning. Exercise is often an important part of the treatment for such conditions, but you may have some limitations or special needs that your doctor can tell you about.

And always remember the golden rule of exercise safety: start *slowly*, and build up the intensity and duration of your exercise *gradually*. Trying to make up for lost time, or go from couch potato to exercise maven overnight, is a prescription for problems.

Getting Started: The Right Gear

Many injuries and setbacks occur because people don't take the time to get themselves well-equipped for their exercise. Make sure you:

- Wear shoes that fit well and are capable of providing the right kind of support for your activity and body type. If you're a runner or walker, get your feet and gait analyzed, and get the right type of shoe for you—this service is usually provided free by stores that specialize in running shoes. Read ["If the Shoe Fits, Wear It!"](#)
- Wear appropriate exercise clothing. Fabrics that absorb sweat and remove it from your skin are best; loose-fitting, light weight cotton is also fine. Women should wear supportive sports bras. But no one should EVER wear rubber or plastic suits or belts—these prevent your body from dissipating heat properly and can lead to serious health risks from overheating and dehydration.
- Use protective gear: helmets for biking or high-contact sports; knee and elbow pads for skating; reflective clothing and/or lights for evening exercise; sunglasses, sunscreen, and hats for outdoor exercise.
- Avoid things like ankle and wrist weights. They can alter your normal movement patterns and increase the risk of injury. If you must add weight to your workout, a weighted vest helps distribute weight more evenly and allows you to move more freely and normally than weights attached to your extremities.

When to Stop: Warning Signs

A certain amount of discomfort during exercise is normal and inevitable—after all, you are challenging your body to do more than it is accustomed to. And you can expect to have some sore muscles after a vigorous workout; often the soreness doesn't show up until a day or two later, especially with strength training.

But pain and other symptoms that occur *during* exercise can be **warning signs that something is wrong**. You should stop exercising right away if you:

- Have pain or pressure in the left or middle part of your chest, or in the left side of your neck, left shoulder or left arm
- Feel dizzy or sick
- Break out in a cold sweat
- Have muscle cramps
- Feel sharp pain in your joints, feet, ankles, or bones
- Notice that your heart starts racing or beating irregularly

If you start to experience these problems during high intensity aerobic exercise, it is best to immediately slow down. Allow your heart rate to drop gradually before stopping completely, since an abrupt stop can cause problems with blood circulation and fainting. However, in cases of severe and sudden pain, stop immediately, seek help, and follow up with your doctor.

Gyms & Trainers: What to Look For

If you do some of your exercise in the gym, whether on your own, in group classes, or with a personal trainer, there are some simple precautions you can take to keep yourself safe:

- Make sure the gym's trainers and instructors have been trained and certified by a reputable, national certification agency, such as ACE, AFAA, ACSM or NSCA. They should also hold current CPR and first aid certifications, so they can take action if an emergency occurs.
- Ask the gym staff about the emergency action plan (every gym should have one and the employees should know its details) and equipment they have on hand, such as a basic first aid kit and an AED (Automated external defibrillator).
- Tell every personal trainer and fitness instructor who works with you about your limitations or medical conditions. Well-trained instructors should ask about this at the beginning of any group

class or during your first session and be able to offer modifications.

- If you don't understand the instructions given, or the proper way to do an exercise or use a piece of equipment, always ask first. Improper technique or body position is a major cause of injury.

Know Your Limits & Your Needs

A big part of exercise safety is prevention. Just as your car will run better when you service it regularly, your body will protect itself from injury when you give it the food, water, rest, and attention it needs to operate at its best.

You'll find a lot of information in the Resource Center and on the Message Boards about basic nutrition, and exercise-related concerns such as [stretching](#), [warming up and cooling down](#) properly, and dealing with [minor aches and pains](#) before they become big problems.

So, do your homework first, then get out there and start sweating!



Common Fitness Blunders - Part 1

Even Experienced Exercisers Can Be Guilty of These

-- By Joe Downie, Certified Physical Fitness Instructor

Both beginners and experienced exercisers can be guilty of a few fitness blunders from time to time. Some may even become a regular part of your fitness routine, much like a bad habit. But, to get the best results from all your hard work, it's important that you don't find yourself creating a fitness routine filled with mistakes. This can set you up for injury, lack of results, boredom and plateaus. Analyze your fitness routine on a regular basis and ask yourself if you fall into any of these common blunders.

Blunder #1: Skipping the Warm Up, Cool Down, and Stretches

This is one of the most common bad habits of exercisers! You finally committed yourself to a fitness routine, and you don't want to waste any time, so you jump right into your work out without warming up, cooling down, or stretching. After all, those low-intensity segments are meaningless and a waste of time, right?

NOT TRUE! Warming up, cooling down and stretching should be the foundation of your exercise program. They should be viewed as a transition into (and out of) exercise, allowing your body and mind to prepare for running, jumping, or strength training. Here is what you gain from proper warm-up, cool downs and stretching sessions:

- Your muscles and connective tissue loosen to prepare for the stress of exercise
- Oxygen and blood flow to your muscles and connective tissue increases, providing fuel for better muscular performance
- Tension in your body decreases
- Breathing patterns establish, helping relax the body during exercise
- Joints are lubricated to allow for better performance
- Muscle soreness is prevented and/or reduced during and after your workout
- Better body awareness
- Quicker reaction time
- Improved posture
- Improved coordination
- Quicker recovery
- Decreased muscle soreness

You've probably exercised without warming up properly, for example, and maybe nothing horrible happened. It may seem unnecessary, but consistently skipping it will limit your gains and put you at risk for injury. You could even be injured without even knowing it since you may not feel any pain right away.

Fix it Tip: Try to warm up with a low impact exercise for 5-10 minutes. A light sweat is a good indicator of your body temperature rising. Follow your workout with 5-10 minutes light exercise to cool down, and stretching, head to toe. Most of your flexibility benefits will come from your post-exercise stretch because your muscles will be so warm. To learn more about the differences between these workout components, read our Reference Guides to [Warming Up](#), [Cooling Down](#) and [Stretching](#).

Blunder #2: Looking For Instant Gratification

We are a culture of instant gratification seekers! Expecting fast results from a new diet and fitness plan is very common. Unfortunately it is one of the worst mindsets a beginner can create. You know about all the

great benefits of exercise, like increased energy, weight loss, and better health. You exercise for a week straight, wake up the following Monday completely wiped out, a couple pounds heavier (because the exercise made you so hungry), and you have a cold. What gives?

Exercise definitely provides many great benefits, but the results are often seen weeks or even months after you begin. When you are consistent:

- Your metabolism speeds up to allow for weight loss
- Your body will adjust to the stress of exercise and you'll feel more rejuvenated
- Your immune system improves to help prevent sickness
- Your strength and endurance improves, making exercise (and daily tasks) easier
- Your mood and energy levels stabilize throughout the day
- You sleep better at night
- You look and feel better!

Fix it Tips: Don't throw up your hands if you don't see what you are looking for. Analyze what you are doing and try to make adjustments. It's worth it.

- Try to focus on other improvement besides weight loss--how you feel, how much you've learned, how you have more energy, etc.
- Keep in mind that progress may be slow in the beginning. It probably took you many years to gain the weight you are trying to lose. You can't expect to take it off in a fraction of the time. Plus, slow and steady weight loss (about 1-2 pounds per week) is healthier--**AND** you're more likely to keep it off when it happens at this rate.
- Get support and encouragement from a buddy, your friends and family, or on the message boards. Sometimes a kind word is all you need to stop you from giving up.