



## **Heart-Healthy Tips: Breaking Through Barriers to Getting Active**

Would you like to do more physical activity but do not know how to make it a part of your life? Below are some common barriers to physical activity and ways to overcome them. After you read them, try writing down the top two or three barriers that you face. Then write down solutions that you think will work for you. You can make regular physical activity a part of your life! Find more tips like these from the Weight-control Information Network.

### **Personal Barriers**

Barrier: Between work, family, and other demands, I am too busy and too tired to exercise.

Solutions:

- ▶ Make physical activity a priority. Carve out some time each week to be active and put it on your calendar. Try waking up a half-hour earlier to walk, scheduling lunchtime workouts, or taking an evening fitness class.
- ▶ Build physical activity into your normal routine. Take stairs instead of elevators, park further away in parking lots, and walk in place while watching TV. Rake the yard, wash the car, or do energetic housework. Make family time physically active by planning a weekend hike through a park, a family softball game, or an evening walk around the block. You can get things done and move around too.
- ▶ Break your workout into three 10-minute segments each day. Taking three short walks during the day may seem easier and less tiring than one 30-minute workout, and is just as good for you.

Barrier: I think my weight is fine, so I am not motivated to exercise.

Solutions:

- ▶ Think about the other health benefits of physical activity. Regular exercise can help lower cholesterol and blood pressure, and lower your odds of getting heart disease, type 2 diabetes, or cancer. Research shows that people who are overweight, active, and fit live longer than people who are not overweight but are inactive and unfit. Physical activity can also lift your mood and increase your energy level.
- ▶ Do it just for fun. Play a team sport, work in a garden, or learn a new dance and make getting fit something fun.
- ▶ Train for a charity event. You can work to help others while you work out.

Barrier: I have never been into sports.

Solutions:

- ▶ Find a physical activity that you enjoy. You do not have to be an athlete to benefit from physical activity. Try yoga, hiking, or planting a garden.

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- ▶ Choose an activity that you can stick with, like walking. Use the time you spend walking to relax, talk with a friend or family member, or just enjoy the scenery.

Barrier: I do not want to spend a lot of money to join a gym or buy workout gear.

Solutions:

- ▶ Choose free activities. Garden, take your children to the park to play, lift plastic milk jugs filled with water or sand, or take a walk.
- ▶ Find out if your job offers any discounts on gym memberships. Some companies get lower membership rates at fitness or health clubs. Other companies will even pay for part of an employee's membership fee.
- ▶ Check out your local recreation or community center. These centers may cost less than other gyms, fitness centers, or health clubs.
- ▶ Choose physical activities that do not require any special gear. Walking requires only a pair of sturdy shoes. To dance, just turn on some music.

### **Place Barriers**

Barrier: My neighborhood does not have sidewalks.

Solutions:

- ▶ Find a safe place to walk. Instead of walking in the street, walk in a friend or family member's neighborhood that has sidewalks. Walk during your lunch break at work. Find out if you can walk at a local school track.
- ▶ Do yard work, wash the car, or do other activities around the house.

Barrier: The winter is too cold/summer is too hot to be active outdoors.

Solutions:

- ▶ Walk around your local indoor shopping mall.
- ▶ Join a fitness or community center. Find one that lets you pay only for the months or classes you want, instead of the whole year.
- ▶ Exercise at home. Work out to fitness videos or DVDs. Check a different one out from the library each week for variety.

### **Health Barriers**

Barrier: I have a health problem (diabetes, heart disease, asthma, arthritis) or injury that I do not want to make worse.

Solutions:

- ▶ Talk with your health care professional. Many health problems are helped by physical activity. Find out what physical activities you can do safely and follow advice about length and intensity of workouts.
- ▶ Start slowly. Take it easy at first and see how you feel before trying more challenging workouts. Stop if you feel out of breath, dizzy, faint, or nauseated, or if you feel pain.
- ▶ Work with a personal trainer. A knowledgeable personal trainer should be able to help you design a fitness plan around an injury.

*Source: The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases Weight-control Information Network*

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