



Heart-Healthy Tips: Exercise for Your Health

Staying motivated to exercise can be difficult, especially if you find your exercise routines to be bland or boring. Try using these simple tips to spice up your current fitness routine or to help motivate you to integrate exercise into your daily routine.

How can I incorporate exercise into my routine?

Start with a little activity every day and add a few minutes every week until you reach your goal. Here are a few sensible tips to help you get started:

- ▶ Walk briskly every day: to work, to school, to do errands.
- ▶ Get off the subway or bus before your stop and walk the rest of the way. Park your car a couple of blocks from where you are going to walk.
- ▶ Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- ▶ Exercise while watching TV. You can stretch, use hand weights, or ride a stationary bike.
- ▶ Put on music and dance.
- ▶ Lay a sport or join an aerobics class.
- ▶ Clean your house.
- ▶ Remember to speak to your doctor or healthcare provider before starting an exercise program.

What kinds of physical activity should be part of my routine?

A comprehensive physical activity routine includes three kinds of activities:

- ▶ **Aerobic exercise** increases your heart rate, works your muscles, and raises your breathing rate. For most people, it's best to aim for a total of about 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week. If you haven't been very active recently, you can start out with 5 or 10 minutes a day and work up to more time each week. Or split up your activity for the day - try a brisk 10-minute walk after each meal. If you're trying to lose weight, you may want to exercise more than 30 minutes a day. Here are some examples of aerobic exercise:
 - ▶ Take a brisk walk (outside or inside on a treadmill).
 - ▶ Go dancing.
 - ▶ Take a low-impact aerobics class.
 - ▶ Swim or do water aerobic exercises.
 - ▶ Try ice-skating or roller-skating.
 - ▶ Play tennis.
 - ▶ Stationary bicycle indoors.

Find more health and wellness tips and resources for first responders at www.healthy-firefighter.org.

- ▶ **Strength training**, done several times a week, helps build strong bones and muscles and makes everyday chores like carrying groceries easier. With more muscle, you burn more calories, even at rest. Here are some ways to do it:
 - ▶ Join a class to do strength training with weights, elastic bands, or plastic tubes.
 - ▶ Lift light weights at home.

- ▶ **Flexibility exercises**, also called stretching, help keep your joints flexible and reduce your chances of injury during other activities. Gentle stretching for 5 to 10 minutes helps your body warm up and get ready for aerobic activities such as walking or swimming. Your healthcare provider can provide information on how to stretch.

Sources: New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation; NVFC Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program