

Getting Started - Tips for Long-term Exercise

Success <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/getting-active/getting-started---tips-for-long-term-exercise-success>



Walking, swimming, cycling, jogging, skiing, aerobic dancing or any of dozens of other activities can help your heart. They all cause you to feel warm, perspire and breathe heavily without being out of breath and without feeling any burning sensation in your muscles. Whether it is a structured exercise program or just part of your daily routine, all exercise adds up to a healthier heart. Take the first step by walking. It's free, easy to do and when you have a walking companion, you're more likely to stay motivated.

Here are some tips for exercise success:

Dress for success!

- Wear comfortable, properly fitted sneakers or flat shoes with laces.
- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing appropriate for the weather and the activity.

Make the time!

- Start slowly. Gradually build up to at least 30 minutes of activity on most or all days of the week (or whatever your doctor recommends).
- Exercise at the same time of day so it becomes a regular part of your lifestyle. For example, you might walk every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from noon to 12:30 p.m.
- Find a convenient time and place to do activities. Try to make it a habit but be flexible. If you miss an exercise opportunity, work activity into your day another way.

Keep reasonable expectations of yourself.

- If you have a high risk of coronary heart disease or some other chronic health problem, check with your healthcare provider before beginning a physical activity program.
- Look for chances to be more active during the day. Walk the mall before shopping, take the stairs instead of the escalator or take 10–15-minute breaks while watching TV or sitting for walking or some other activity.
- Don't get discouraged if you stop for a while. Get started again gradually and work up to your old pace.
- Don't exercise too vigorously right after meals, when it's very hot or humid, or when you just don't feel up to it.

Make it fun!

- Choose activities that are fun, not exhausting. Add variety. Develop a repertoire of several activities that you can enjoy. That way, exercise will never seem boring or routine.
- Ask family and friends to join you — you may be more likely to stick with it if you have company. Or join an exercise group, health club or community center. Many churches and senior centers offer exercise programs too. (Remember to get your doctor's permission first.)
- Use variety to keep your interest up. Walk one day, swim the next, then go for a bike ride on the weekend.
- Use music or audio books to keep you entertained.

Track and celebrate your success!

- Note your activities on a calendar or in a logbook. Write down the distance or length of time of your activity and how you feel after each session.
- Keep a record of your activities. Reward yourself at special milestones with non-food items, like a small gift or shopping trip for yourself. Nothing motivates like success!