

First Steps to Getting Active

The first step in becoming more active is the hardest. But as you begin to add activity to your day, you will see that the key to becoming active is learning to identify the opportunities for fitness and taking advantage of them as much as possible. The key to getting started is with everyday activities.

The Surgeon General recommends doing moderate intensity activities for 30 minutes a day on most days of the week. The 30 minutes does not have to occur all at once. Some examples of increasing everyday activity are using the stairs instead of the elevator, walking part of the way to work, or parking your car in the farthest space available and walking the rest of the way to your office. Every 5 to 10-minute dose of activity can help increase energy and reduce stress levels.

Your Fitness Program: Sticking With It

To avoid burn out or injury, start your exercise program slowly. Try to build these new activities, such as walking, into your daily work and home life. By developing short-term goals (i.e. "I will walk for 20 minutes after lunch every day this week"), you are more likely to accomplish them.

To achieve cardiorespiratory fitness and significant weight loss, you will need to gradually increase the intensity of the activity from moderate to vigorous, where you are working about 75-80% of your maximum heart rate, and increase the time you are active from 20-30 minutes to 20-60 minutes, as well as maintaining your commitment to regular activity. In other words, to improve your cardiovascular fitness, increase your muscular strength and flexibility, and change your body composition, you have to work harder.

Use the **Exercise Planner handout** to keep track of your activities during the week or month. It also helps you to see your progress as you increase your activity levels, as well as help you plan exercise into your schedule each week.

More Exercise Tips

- ✓ Register for a walking event or short race (5k) 3-4 months from now to give you a goal to work towards and time to train for it.
- ✓ Increase the intensity of your walking program by increasing the pace and/or distance of your regular walks.
- ✓ Alter your walking/running route to include hills and some stairclimbing. This will also increase the intensity of your program.
- ✓ Try other activities as part of your exercise program, such as biking, swimming, tennis, hiking, rock climbing, dance lessons, etc.