

Getting Started

Start Now: Too often, people wait for the perfect time to begin an exercise program. It is unlikely the perfect time will ever come — and it won't last anyway — so make fitness fit into your life just the way it is today.

Start Small: Assess your current level of fitness then build up gradually from there. Starting with even five minutes of exercise a day and increasing your time and intensity slowly is the safest and most successful way of building this wonderful habit into your lifestyle.

Be Consistent: Consistency is one of the keys to improving your fitness. It's helpful to write down your plan on your calendar or on your "to do" list.

Be Flexible: When life gets in the way (and it will), adjust your routine so you can still fit fitness in. The benefits you'll gain from physical activity makes it worth your commitment to be consistent yet flexible.

Set Goals: Small, realistic, achievable goals will encourage you along the way. Set specific goals like a specific number of sessions per week, a certain number of minutes per session, a particular number of steps or repetitions or a lifestyle goal like being able to climb a flight of stairs without feeling breathless.

Stay Motivated: Look for ways to keep yourself motivated since this will be a crucial part of your long-term success. Since it takes time to see the physical changes from increasing your activity, find ways to reward yourself for small steps along the way. You could pay yourself a quarter or a dollar every time you complete a session and then spend it on exercise clothing, music or even a massage or manicure. Most importantly, write down an inspiring statement and keep it in a place you will see often. Start with something like, "I have the energy to live my life to the fullest" then look for ways to make it come true.

Have Fun: Keep your exercise enjoyable and interesting – just like when you were a kid. Choose activities that appeal to you because if you dread it, you just won't do it. Change your routine frequently by trying new types of exercise, new locations and new techniques. Consider finding an exercise buddy, someone who will make exercise more fun and hold you accountable.



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Americans In Motion - Healthy Interventions
AAFP National Research Network

Get FITT:

No matter what your current fitness level, you'll achieve all of the benefits by adjusting any one of these variables to create a fitness program that is just right for you.

Frequency: How often you do the activity. Make time for exercise most days of the week.

Intensity: How much effort you use during the activity. Physical activity doesn't have to be hard or hurt to be beneficial. In fact, it's more important to find activities that are convenient, comfortable and fun so you'll stick with it. Even if you have physical limitations it's always possible to find some way to increase your activity level. If you have been very inactive, start by increasing your lifestyle activity then work toward a regular exercise routine. You'll be amazed at how your body adapts to whatever challenges you give it.

Time: How long you do the activity. Aim for 30 to 90 minutes of physical activity a day. That includes your lifestyle activity (like household chores, gardening, taking the stairs at work) and exercise. If it's easier or more convenient for you, studies have shown that breaking your exercise sessions into smaller chunks throughout the day is just as beneficial as one longer session. You could do ten minutes in the morning, ten minutes after lunch and ten minutes in the afternoon and it would still "count."

Type: What kind of activity you choose. Find fun physical activities that suit your personality and lifestyle. Choose from activities that increase your stamina, flexibility and strength. Most importantly, start slowly and allow your body to adjust gradually and comfortably.

By moving more, increasing your lifestyle activity and starting a fitness program that you enjoy, you'll soon have the active life you were born to live.