

WHOLE-PERSON WELLBEING (General Healthy Lifestyle): 04 — EXERCISE

(NOTE: Check with your health care provider for any nutritional concerns related to physical conditions, for example, diabetes, hyperglycemia, heart disease, etc.)

(NOTE: Check with your health care provider before beginning an exercise program.)

KEY POINTS:

- **Gradual is good; think moderation, not perfection.**
- **Start exercising, no matter how little — start light and gradually increase amount and intensity.**
- **Exercise contributes to overall wellbeing, mental and physical.**

TRACK:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Weight (<i>weekly</i>) | <i>(Goal: lose ½ -2 lbs., if necessary)</i> |
| • Water intake (<i>daily — 8-ounce glasses</i>) | <i>(Goal: 6-8 glasses)</i> |
| • Breakfast (non-sugary) (<i>daily — yes / no</i>) | <i>(Goal: yes)</i> |
| • Sugar intake (<i>daily — grams</i>) | <i>(Goal: 50-60 grams)</i> |
| • Vegetable/fruit servings (<i>daily</i>) | <i>(Goal: 2-4 servings)</i> |
| • Second servings at meals (<i>daily</i>) | <i>(Goal: 0 seconds)</i> |
| • Minutes of exercise (<i>daily</i>) | <i>(Goal: 20-30 minutes, 3-5 days per week)</i> |

GOALS:

- **Begin a weekly exercise routine, no matter how light.**
- **Gradually increase your exercise routine until you reach the AHA guidelines.**

Start Exercising — No Matter How Little

(NOTE: Get your health care provider's guidance before starting an exercise program.)

OK. Your mind is open. It's time to get started.

- **Everyone must exercise to some degree to be healthy.**
 - Eventually, everyone must accept that exercise, in some form, must become a part of his or her life to stay healthy and in shape. This is widely accepted by medical science. But you don't have to train like a professional athlete to experience the health benefits of exercise. Anything is better than nothing, even if it's only walking three or five minutes, three times per week — *most* days of the week would be best. If all the way around the block is too far at first, just walk several houses and back. Start light and gradually increase amount and intensity of exercise.

- ***The most important thing about exercise is simply getting started.***
- ***Start exercising, no matter how little — start light and gradually increase amount and intensity.***
- ***Gradual is good; think moderation, not perfection***
 - Like other healthy habits you want to establish, start small and gradually increase your efforts.
- Exercise does not have to be high-tech or intensive to be effective. Becoming active is the most important part.
- ***Create different activities during the week to stay focused and engaged.*** Look for enjoyable, comfortable activities such as gardening and other hobbies, or sports and other group activities that can fit into your daily routine.
 - The main idea is that you want to engage in some significant, consistent movement, ideally 5 days per week. Effective exercise can include the following:
 - Walking
 - Yard work
 - Housework
 - Dancing
 - Biking
 - Bowling, table tennis and other light sports
 - Exercise classes
 - Anything else that involves physical exertion
 - Turn any of these light forms of exercise into moderate-intensity exercise by increasing your rate or length of time.
- ***Walking is a great way to start.***
 - Start small, if necessary, for example, 5 minutes the first day, 6 minutes the second day, etc. What might have seemed impossible will soon become possible, and even enjoyable.

Start Light Exercise — Gradually Increase Amount and Intensity

Right now, take note of your weekly exercise level. Do you play any sports? Do you get any exercise at work? Do you walk the dog? Or do you sit at a desk all day and in front of the television all evening? No matter. Your plan now is to note where you're at and improve from there. Don't beat yourself up if you aren't active now. But do make a commitment to get started.

Many people find that walking is their best way to get started because they can do it almost anywhere and it's easy, enjoyable and free. Consider wearing a pedometer or a digital activity tracker that can

track the amount of steps you take. This is effective for measuring your dedicated walking exercise, as well as for how many steps you take throughout the day.

You might have heard that people should strive for 10,000 steps (about 5 miles) per day. This can indeed be a good goal, but don't feel that you have to achieve this right away. In the beginning, 5,000 or even 1,000 steps might be good for you. More importantly, get your projected amount of minutes per day doing your dedicated walking exercise. Then get extra steps where you can, for example, take the stairs instead of the elevator, or park further away from the front door of the store you're visiting.

Additionally, don't worry about using leg or arm weights while walking. Many fitness and medical experts advise against this, discouraging continuous joint movement with added weight.

Plan a schedule for yourself. **Planning is important.** So is contingency planning, that is, planning when you'll make up your scheduled minutes of exercise if they get interrupted or pre-empted.

Where to start? **The American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes of aerobic/cardiovascular activity (walking, biking, running, etc.), five days per week.** You might be thinking, "Who has time for that?" Well, right now, we want you to create an exercise schedule somewhere between zero minutes per week and the AHA recommendations (150 minutes per week) — whatever you think is realistic to start. You need to consider your available time AND your current capacity for exercise. You might have all the time in the world, but your body is not used to any exertion. If that's the case, start walking 5 minutes per day, or even 3 minutes. If your body is ready for it, go 10, 20 or even the full 30 minutes per day.

- **Make a schedule now and start exercising this week. Start light — gradually increase amount and intensity.**
 - Make contingency plans to make up your interrupted or missed exercise sessions.
- **Start small and go slow in the beginning.**
 - Don't make the mistake of starting out too aggressively, then quitting because you get hurt, you're too tired or you're too sore.
 - There are no quick results, though you will feel better after exercising. Be the turtle, not the hare — create new habits and stick with them over the long term.
- **Gradually increase your exercise level, over time, until you reach the American Heart Association guidelines:**
 - *30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic/cardiovascular physical activity (walking, biking, running, etc.), 5 days per week*
 - *Muscle-strengthening activity (resistance training), 2 days per week*



Benefits

Obviously, exercise burns calories, which is necessary for weight loss and maintenance. But exercise is good — and necessary — for your overall wellbeing in other ways. It improves your mood, which strengthens your ability to set and achieve goals: in this case, healthier lifestyle habits. Exercise sets your brain awash in healthy, feel-good neurotransmitters. The technical terms are not important, but the results are. You feel better, more confident and productive.

Exercise also produces beneficial effects for your other organs, even if you are not overweight. It's important to remember that all of these things you are doing — improving your nutrition, exercising, sleeping better, and controlling your stress levels — interact with each other to produce overall positive effects upon your body, brain, mind, mood, i.e., your overall mind-body wellbeing. What's not to like?