

I'd like to start an exercise program. How do I begin?

Plan out the types of exercises, how long to do each one,
and how often to do them.



We all know that exercise is important to maintain a healthy lifestyle. However, if you've never participated in an exercise program before, you might have questions: How long should each exercise session be? How many sessions should I complete each week? What kinds of exercises should I be doing?

There are many different ways to exercise, but remember to include aerobic exercise, resistance training and flexibility into your routine.

Aerobic exercise

This form of exercise is also known as cardio. Aerobic exercise strengthens the lungs and the cardiovascular system, which includes the heart and blood vessels. Your cardiovascular system is responsible for the transportation of oxygen to your entire body.

Examples of aerobic exercise include walking, jogging, cycling, hiking, jumping rope and swimming. Each week you should be getting at *least* 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise, or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic exercise. Keep in mind, it is better to spread it out throughout the week.

- For moderate aerobic exercise, aim for 30 minutes each day.
- For vigorous aerobic exercise, aim for 15 minutes each day.
- Remember, these are the *minimum* requirements. If you feel comfortable progressing, you can always add more to your routine.

There is an easy way to tell the difference between moderate and vigorous aerobic exercise: You should be able to hold a conversation during moderate aerobic activity. With vigorous exercise, your heart rate and breathing will increase, and you will find it difficult to say more than a few words.

Resistance training

In addition to aerobic exercise, you should incorporate resistance training into your routine. Resistance training involves free weights, resistance bands or even your own body weight. It helps improve the strength of your bones, muscles and tendons. Resistance training has also been shown to increase your metabolism.

It is recommended that a resistance training routine should be performed at *least* twice a week, with a minimum of one day recovery in between. Each workout should target all of the major muscle groups: chest, back, shoulders, core, arms and legs.

- Aim for one set of exercises for each muscle group, and pick a weight or resistance that tires your muscles after 12-15 repetitions.
- As you progress in your routine, you can gradually increase the repetitions, the weight or the number of sets of your exercises. Also try to add an additional day of resistance training to your routine.

Flexibility and stretching

Along with aerobic exercise and resistance training, you should also incorporate flexibility and stretching into your routine. Stretching helps improve blood circulation, increases range of motion in your joints, and decreases your risk of injury.

The two types of stretching that are used most often are **static** and **dynamic**.

- **Dynamic stretching** should be performed before a workout. This involves slow, controlled movements to increase flexibility and range of motion before you stress your muscles and joints.
- **Static stretching** involves holding a stretch for around 30 seconds. This should be done when you're sitting for long periods of time or after workouts.

Yoga is a great way to incorporate flexibility into your routine. It combines body weight resistance training with dynamic and static stretching.

Recovery

One last piece of an exercise routine that is extremely important is recovery. Make sure you are getting the right amount of sleep each night (seven to eight hours) and drinking enough water (minimum of one half ounce per pound of body weight). If you have an injury, do not try to push through it. Speak with your doctor, and he or she will give you guidelines on treatment and when you can expect to return to your regular exercise routine.

Next steps

You may want to speak to a personal trainer if you're a beginner. He or she can design a program specifically for you and should be able to work around any injuries and limitations.

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Prior to starting any exercise program, please speak to your doctor.

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