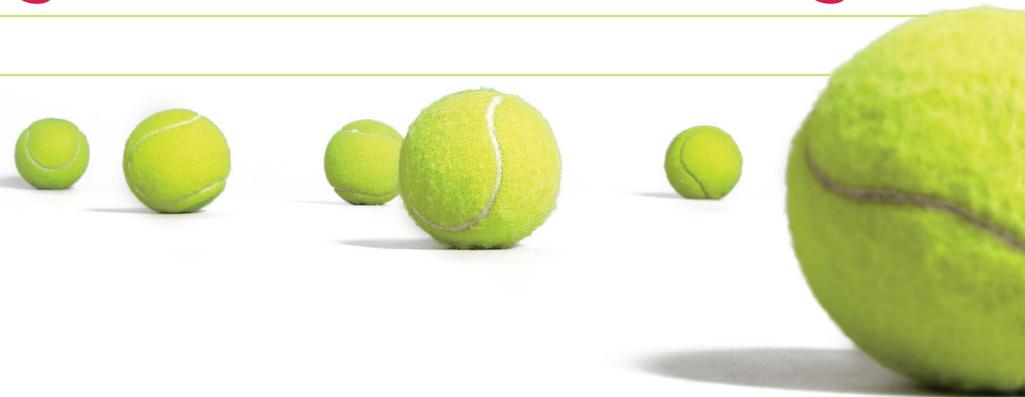


**Your Everyday Guide** *from the National Institute on Aging at NIH*

# Exercise & Physical Activity

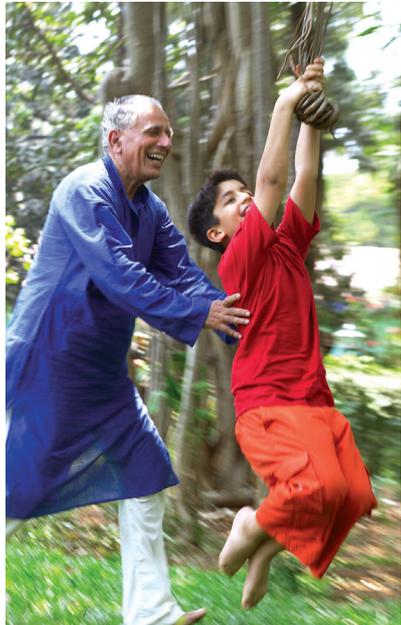




## Why Is Physical Activity Such a Big Deal?

Regular exercise and physical activity are important to the physical and mental health of almost everyone, including older adults. Being physically active can help you continue to do the things you enjoy and stay independent as you age. Regular physical activity over long periods of time can produce long-term health benefits. That's why health experts say that older adults should be active every day to maintain their health.

In addition, regular exercise and physical activity can reduce the risk of developing some diseases and disabilities that develop as people grow older. In some cases, exercise is an effective treatment for many chronic conditions. For example, studies show that people with arthritis, heart disease, or diabetes benefit from regular exercise. Exercise also helps people with high blood pressure, balance problems, or difficulty walking.



One of the great things about physical activity is that there are so many ways to be active. For example, you can be active in short spurts throughout the day, or you can set aside specific times of the day on specific days of the week to exercise. Many physical activities — such as brisk walking, raking leaves, or taking the stairs whenever you can — are free or low cost and do not require special equipment. You could also check out an exercise video from the library or use the fitness center at a local senior center.

This guide shows you many types of exercise and physical activity. It also has lots of tips to help you be active in ways that suit your lifestyle, interests, health, and budget, whether you're just starting out, getting back to exercising after a break, or fit enough to run a 3-mile race. It's for everyone — people who are healthy and those who live with an ongoing health problem or disability.

## What's the Difference Between Physical Activity and Exercise?

Both terms refer to the voluntary movements you do that burn calories. Physical activities are activities that get your body moving such as gardening, walking the dog, raking leaves, and taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Exercise is a form of physical activity that is specifically planned, structured, and repetitive such as weight training, tai chi, or an aerobics class.

Physical activity and exercise are both important and can help improve your ability to do the everyday activities you enjoy. (See **Exercise and Everyday Activities Go Together** on page 15.)

**The bottom line?** There are many ways to be active every day. Find something you enjoy doing, include it in your regular routine, and try to increase your level of activity over time.



## make it a priority

Being active and exercising regularly can change your life. See how Greta has benefited from regular exercise:

“At age 67, I’m in the best physical condition of my life. Two years ago, I joined a low-impact aerobics class at a nearby senior center. The entire routine is done to music, planned and led by an instructor. My balance has improved greatly, and my osteoporosis has remained stable.”

# Get ready

Today, we know a lot more about older adults and their need to exercise. Regardless of their health and physical abilities, older adults can gain a lot by staying physically active. Even if you have difficulty standing or walking, you can still exercise and benefit from it. In fact, in most cases, you have more to lose by *not* doing anything.

Exercise and physical activity benefit every area of your life. They can:

- Help maintain and improve your physical strength and fitness.
- Help improve your ability to do the things you want to do.
- Help improve your balance.
- Help manage and prevent diseases like diabetes, heart disease, breast and colon cancer, and osteoporosis.
- Help reduce feelings of depression, may improve mood and overall well-being, and may improve or maintain some aspects of cognitive function, such as your ability to shift quickly between tasks, plan an activity, and ignore irrelevant information.

As you've probably noticed, the key word is **you**. The benefits you gain from physical activity will depend on your starting point and how much effort you put into it. You'll need to match your physical activity to your own needs and abilities. For example, some people can swim a mile without thinking twice about it. For others, a slow walk to the corner and back is a big achievement. Exercise and physical activity are good for just about everybody, and there are many activities to choose from. This guide has ideas to help you be active and have fun.





## make it fun

Having fun and socializing are major reasons active people give when asked why they exercise. Ramesh can show you how:

“I started playing tennis 38 years ago for pleasure. After moving south to get away from the cold and snow of the Midwest, I started playing year round. I play with friends every weekend, both singles and doubles. After tennis, we socialize over refreshments. That’s the best part of our get-together. At age 65, I’m the oldest in the group; the youngest is 16. I love the game and hope to play forever.”

## What Kinds of Exercises and Physical Activities Improve Health and Physical Ability?

Exercises generally fall into four main categories: endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility. Though we describe them separately, some activities fit into several categories. For example, many endurance activities also help build strength, and strength exercises can help improve balance.



# GET READY

---

## Endurance

Endurance, or aerobic, activities increase your breathing and heart rate. These activities help keep you healthy, improve your fitness, and help you do the tasks you need to do every day.

Endurance exercises improve the health of your heart, lungs, and circulatory system. They also delay or prevent many diseases that are common in older adults such as diabetes, colon and breast cancers, heart disease, and others. Physical activities that build endurance include:

- Brisk walking
- Yard work (mowing, raking)
- Dancing
- Jogging
- Swimming
- Biking
- Climbing stairs or hills
- Playing tennis
- Playing basketball

## Strength

Even small increases in muscle strength can make a big difference in your ability to stay independent and carry out everyday activities such as climbing stairs and carrying groceries. Some people call using weight to improve your muscle strength “strength training” or “resistance training.” Strength exercises include:

- Lifting weights (see page 41)
- Using a resistance band (see page 44)

## Balance

Balance exercises help prevent falls, a common problem in older adults. Many lower-body strength exercises also will improve your balance. Exercises to improve your balance include:

- Standing on one foot (see page 65)
- Heel-to-toe walk (see page 66)
- Tai Chi

## Flexibility

Stretching can help your body stay flexible and limber, which gives you more freedom of movement for your regular physical activity as well as for your everyday activities. To increase your flexibility, try:

- Shoulder and upper arm stretch (see page 73)
- Calf stretch (see page 88)
- Yoga

# GET READY

## Exercise and Everyday Activities Go Together

Exercise and physical activity are good for your health. In addition, improving your endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility can help you do many of your everyday activities. For example:

**Endurance** activities will make it easier for you to:

- Push your grandchildren on the swings
- Vacuum
- Rake leaves

**Strength** training can maintain your ability to:

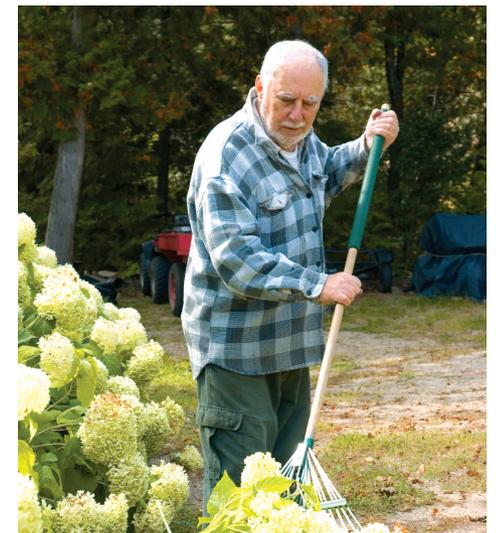
- Carry a full laundry basket from the basement to the second floor
- Carry your smaller grandchildren
- Lift bags of mulch in the garden

**Flexibility**, or stretching, exercises make it possible for you to:

- Look over your shoulder to see what's behind you as you back the car out of the driveway
- Make the bed
- Bend over to tie your shoes

**Balance** exercises can help you:

- Stand on tiptoe to reach something on the top shelf
- Walk up and down the stairs
- Walk on an uneven sidewalk without falling



# get set

---

**We hope you agree that regular exercise and physical activity are important and that you're ready to take action! This chapter is all about getting organized. It offers tips for setting short- and long-term goals, choosing activities and fitting them into your daily life, and managing some of the practical things, such as getting the right shoes or working with a personal trainer.**

---

This guide's main goal is to help you become more active, get the most from your activities, and do them safely. The key is to know your starting point and build slowly from there. Knowing your starting point will help you pick activities that are comfortable and realistic for you. Starting out this way also will help you be successful.

## **Identifying Your Starting Point**

Think about a typical weekday and weekend day. How much time do you spend sitting? How much time are you active? When you're up and moving, what kinds of activities are you doing?

To help you figure out your activity level, try filling in an activity log. For a couple of weekdays and a weekend, keep track of how much time you exercise or are physically active. Write down how much time you spend doing each activity. The **Activity Log** on page 102 will get you started.

You can use the last column of the **Activity Log** to write down some ways you think you can add activities to your daily routine. If you're not active yet, aim for a modest beginning and build from there. If you are already pretty active, then you can be more ambitious about adding to your activities.





### QUICK TIP

There are many ways to fit exercise and physical activity into your regular routine:



Try something new: If you baby-sit for your grandchildren, how about walking to the park instead of playing video games?



Rethink your priorities: How important is an entire afternoon of TV? How about a walk after lunch instead?



Work harder at the things you already do: Rake the leaves instead of using the leaf blower.

### Setting Your Goals

Many people find that having a firm goal in mind motivates them to move ahead on a project. Goals are most useful when they are specific, realistic, and important to you. Consider both short- and long-term goals. Your success depends on setting goals that really matter to you. Write down your goals, put them where you can see them, and review them regularly.



In addition to seeing how physically active you are now, you can check how fit your body is. Several simple tests can help you see how fit you are right now (see page 92). The results can help you set realistic goals. They also will be useful later on to measure your progress.

Short-term goals will help you make physical activity a regular part of your daily life. For these goals, think about the things you'll need to get or do in order to be physically active. For example, you may need to buy walking shoes or fill out an **Activity Log** so you can figure out how to fit physical activity into your busy day. Make sure your short-term goals will really help you be active. Here are a few examples of short-term goals:

- Today, I will decide to be more active.
- Tomorrow, I will find out about exercise classes in my area.
- By the end of this week, I will talk with my friend about exercising with me a couple of times a week.
- In the next 2 weeks, I will make sure I have the shoes and comfortable clothes I need to start walking.

**QUICK TIP**

Don't forget to build rewards into your plan. For each goal you reach, treat yourself to something special — a movie, a trip to a museum, a new CD, or a picnic in the park.

Let us help you celebrate your progress! If you increase your physical activity for more than a month, call our Information Center at (800) 222-2225 and we'll send you a certificate from the National Institute on Aging to recognize your commitment.



## Writing a Plan to Add Exercise and Physical Activity to Your Life

Some people find that writing an exercise and physical activity plan helps them keep their promise to be active. See if this works for you. Be sure the plan is realistic for you to do, especially as you gain experience in how to be active. You might even make a contract with a friend or family member to carry out your plan. Involving another person can help you keep your commitment.

Make your plan specific and grounded in your goals. For each exercise or activity you choose, include:

- What kind of activity you plan to do
- Why you want to do it
- When you will do it
- Where you will do it

Start out with realistic activities based on how physically active you are now. Don't expect to go from couch potato to super athlete right away. Regularly review and update your plan and long-term goals so that you can build on your success.

When it comes to motivation, the first few months are crucial. If you can stick with physical activities you enjoy, it's a good sign that you will be able to make exercise and physical activity a regular part of your everyday life.

## Talking With Your Doctor About Exercise and Physical Activity

Most older people don't have health problems that would prevent them from doing moderate activity or the types of exercises described in this guide. In fact, there's a way for almost every older adult to exercise safely and get meaningful health benefits.

You may want to talk with your doctor, however, if you aren't used to energetic activity and you want to start a vigorous exercise program or significantly increase your physical activity. You also should talk with your doctor if you have any of the health problems mentioned on page 22. This does **not** mean that exercise is dangerous. Doctors rarely tell people not to exercise, but they may have certain safety tips for those who have recently had hip or back surgery, those with uncontrolled health problems, or those with chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, or arthritis.

# EXERCISE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



## QUICK TIP

Some people with diabetes may need special shoes or shoe inserts to prevent serious foot problems. Medicare may pay some of the costs. Your doctor or podiatrist can tell you how to get these special shoes.



## Safety First: When to Check with Your Doctor

Almost anyone, at any age, can do some type of exercise and physical activity. You can still be active even if you have a long-term condition like heart disease or diabetes. In fact, exercise and physical activity may help. But, talk with your doctor if you aren't used to energetic activity. Other reasons to check with your doctor before you exercise include:

- Any new symptom you haven't yet discussed
- Dizziness or shortness of breath
- Chest pain or pressure
- The feeling that your heart is skipping, racing, or fluttering
- Blood clots
- An infection or fever with muscle aches
- Unplanned weight loss
- Foot or ankle sores that won't heal
- Joint swelling
- A bleeding or detached retina, eye surgery, or laser treatment
- A hernia
- Recent hip or back surgery

## Getting the Right Shoes

Your shoes are an important part of your physical activity routine. Remember, you're going to be wearing them a lot. Here are a few pointers to keep in mind:

- Choose shoes that are made for the type of physical activity you want to do (walking, running, dancing, bowling, tennis).
- Look for shoes with flat, non-skid soles; good heel support; enough room for your toes; and a cushioned arch that's not too high or too thick.
- Make sure your shoes fit well and provide proper support for your feet. This is especially important if you have diabetes or arthritis. Shoes should feel comfortable right from the start.
- Think of your shoes as safety equipment for your feet. Check them regularly, and replace them when they're worn out. You can tell you need new shoes when:
  - The tread on the bottom is worn down
  - Your feet (especially your arches) feel tired after activity
  - Your shins, knees, or hips hurt after activity

# go!

Now that you know about the many types of physical activity and you've set your goals, you're ready to *go!* This chapter has tips to help you get started, resume your activity if you've stopped, stay active, and even increase your activity level over time.

## Three Keys to Success

To help you get started and keep going, here are three ways to approach exercise and physical activity.

### 1. Include Physical Activity in Your Everyday Life

Physical activity needs to be a regular, permanent habit to produce benefits. Again, the key word is **you**. Set yourself up to succeed right from the start by choosing activities that appeal to you, exercising safely, charting your progress to see your success, and making your activity routine fit your personal lifestyle. Here are a few ways to make physical activity a regular part of your daily life.

**Make it a priority.** Many of us lead busy lives, and it's easy to put physical activity at the bottom of the "to do" list. Remember, though, being active is one of the most important things you can do each day to maintain and improve your health. Make a point to include physical activities throughout your day. Try being active first thing in the morning before you get busy. Think of your time to exercise as a special appointment, and mark it on your calendar.

**Make it easy.** If it's difficult or costs too much, you probably won't be active. You are more likely to exercise if it's easy to do. Put your 2-pound weights next to your easy chair so you can do some lifting while you watch TV. Walk up and down the soccer field during your grandchild's game.



# EXERCISE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



## STICKING WITH IT: What Works

You're more likely to stay active if you:

- Think you will benefit from your activities
- Include activities you enjoy
- Feel you can do the activities correctly
- Believe the activities are safe
- Have regular access to the activities
- Can fit the activities into your daily schedule
- Find that the activities are affordable
- Can see the benefits of regular exercise and physical activity

Walk the entire mall or every aisle of the grocery store when you go shopping. When you go out to get the mail, walk around the block. Join a gym or fitness center that's close to home. You can be active all at once, or break it up into smaller amounts throughout the day. Do more of the activities you already like and know how to do.

**Make it social.** Enlist a friend or family member. Many people agree that having an “exercise buddy” keeps them going. Take a yoga class with a neighbor. If you don't already have an exercise partner, find one by joining a walking club at your local mall or an exercise class at a nearby senior center. Take a walk during lunch with a co-worker.

**Make it interesting and make it fun.** Do things you enjoy and pick up the pace a bit. If you love the outdoors, try biking, fishing, jogging, or hiking. Listen to music or a book on CD while walking, gardening, or raking. Plan a hiking trip at a nearby park.

**Above all, make it an active decision.** Seize opportunities. Choose to be active in many places and many ways:

- When you unload the groceries, strengthen your arms by lifting the milk carton or a 1-pound can a few times before you put it away.
- When you go shopping, build your endurance by parking the car at the far end of the parking lot and walking briskly to the store. Or, get off the bus one or two stops earlier than usual.
- Instead of calling or e-mailing a colleague at work, go in person — and take the stairs!
- Take a few extra trips up and down the steps at home to strengthen your legs and build endurance.
- Try to do some of your errands on foot rather than in the car.



- Multi-task the active way:
  - › While you're waiting in line, practice your balancing skills by standing on one foot for a few seconds, then the other. Gradually build up your time.
  - › While you're talking on the phone, stand up and do a few leg raises or toe stands to strengthen your legs.
  - › Take advantage of small bits of “down time” to do an exercise or two. For example, while you're waiting for the coffee to brew or for your spouse to get ready to go out, do a few wall push-ups or calf stretches.

## 2. Try All Four Types of Exercise

Most people tend to focus on one activity or type of exercise and think they're doing enough. The goal is to be creative and choose exercises from each of the four types we've talked about — endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility. Mixing it up will help you reap the benefits of each type of exercise, as well as reduce boredom and risk of injury.



## make it easy

Finding enjoyable ways to add exercise to your life can be the ticket to success. See how Marian made it work for her:

“I’m an active 62-year-old, but a family history of heart disease and high cholesterol convinced me that I needed more exercise. After I tried walking on a treadmill at a nearby community center, I knew I’d be happier outside. So, I got a step counter and started walking in my neighborhood. I’ve seen purple tulips bloom in spring and red dogwood leaves drop in the fall. I always come home with more energy for the rest of my day.”

# EXERCISE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



## QUICK TIP

If you're thinking of moving to a retirement or assisted-living community, ask whether the community has a pool, exercise classes, walking trails, a golf course, or personal trainer. Does it have well-lit sidewalks so you can walk safely in the evening as well as during the day? Are there parks nearby?



**If you lift weights**, alternate these exercises with time on the treadmill or stationary bike. End your routine with stretching exercises.

**If you focus mainly on endurance activities**, be sure to add stretching, balance, or strength exercises to your routine. If you want to do strength exercises every day, alternate muscle groups, or exercise all of your muscle groups every other day.

### 3. Plan for Breaks in the Routine (Life Happens!)

Getting older can mean more time for trips to see children and grandchildren or vacations away from home. People retire and move to new houses or even new parts of the country. Sometimes the unexpected happens — family illness, caregiving responsibilities, or the death of a loved one. All of these events can interrupt your physical activity routines.

These breaks can make it hard or even impossible at times to stick with your regular activities. But you can start again. Here are a few ideas to help you stay active or start again if you've had to stop:

**Don't be too hard on yourself.** Recognize that there will be times when you won't want to exercise, or it feels too hard. You are not alone; everyone has those feelings. Just try to get back to your activities as soon as possible. The sooner you resume some sort of activity, the better you'll feel, and the easier it will be to get back into your routine.

**Talk with your doctor about when you can resume your regular routine** if you stopped exercising because of an illness or new symptoms.

**Think about the reasons you started exercising** and the goals you set for yourself. Remembering your motivations and how much you've already accomplished may help recharge your batteries and get you started again.

**Ask family and friends to help you** get back on track. Sometimes, you may want an exercise buddy. At other times, all you may need is a word of support.

**Try something easier or an activity you haven't done recently** if you don't like the activity you started. You might even want to try something you've never done before. Mastering something simple or new may give you the confidence you need to resume a regular exercise program.

# GO!

**Talk with your doctor or trainer.** You may get the boost you need to move past the hurdle.

**Start again at a comfortable level** if you haven't exercised for several weeks. Then gradually build back up. With a little time, you'll be back on track.

**Think creatively about other ways to exercise** if you can't do your regular physical activities because of bad weather or a change in your routine. For example, if caring for a loved one is keeping you indoors, try an exercise video, jog in place, dance around your living room, or walk up and down the stairs a few extra times. Just keep moving!

**Be flexible.** When your grandchildren come for a visit, reschedule your exercise during their nap time, or take them with you for a walk.

**Believe in yourself!** Feel confident that even if your activity is interrupted, you can start again and be successful. Don't worry about the time you missed. What's important is to focus on your fitness goals and start again at whatever level is possible for you.

## Walking Safely in Rural Areas

Rural areas may have less traffic than big cities, but “a walk in the country” does require special care. Often the vehicles on rural roads travel at much higher speeds than pedestrians are used to, and drivers won't expect to see someone walking on or near the side of the road. So, remember the following safety rules, and enjoy your walk!

- Always walk facing oncoming traffic.
- Look for a smooth, stable surface alongside the road.
- If there are guardrails, see if there's a smooth, flat surface behind the barrier where you can walk.
- If you need to walk on a paved shoulder, stay as far away from traffic as possible.
- Watch for bridges and narrow shoulders.
- Be sure drivers can see you. Wear brightly colored clothing, and if you walk during low-light hours — dusk or dawn — be sure you have reflective material on your jacket or walking shoes and carry a flashlight.
- Take along a cell phone and an ID, especially if walking alone.



# EXERCISE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



## A few more tips on coping with breaks in your exercise routine

Sometimes the reason you have to stop exercising is temporary; sometimes it's permanent. There may be a change in your living arrangements or in your health, for example. Some are happy occasions; some are sad. Here are some ways to manage these breaks.

	Temporary	Permanent
A Change in Your Situation	<p><b>You're on vacation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many hotels now have fitness centers. Check out the facilities where you'll be staying, and bring along your exercise clothing or equipment (resistance band, bathing suit, or walking shoes).</li> <li>• Get out and see the sights on foot rather than just by tour bus.</li> </ul> <p><b>Caring for an ill spouse is taking up much of your time:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work out to an exercise video when your spouse is napping.</li> <li>• Ask a family member or friend to come over so you can go for a walk.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Your usual exercise buddy moves away:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask another friend to go with you on your daily walk.</li> <li>• Ask other older adults in your area where they go for walks or what physical activity resources are available nearby.</li> <li>• Join an exercise class at your local community center or senior center. This is a great way to meet other active people.</li> </ul> <p><b>You move to a new community:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check out the fitness centers, parks, and recreation associations in your new neighborhood. Look for activities that match your interests and abilities.</li> <li>• Get involved!</li> </ul>
A Change in Your Health	<p><b>The flu keeps you out of action for a few weeks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait until you feel better and then start your activity again.</li> <li>• Gradually build back up to your previous level of activity.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You are recovering from hip or back surgery:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with your doctor about specific exercises and activities you can do safely when you're feeling better.</li> <li>• Start slowly and gradually build up your activities as you become stronger.</li> </ul>



### make it safe

For many people, even those who exercise regularly, breaks in the routine mean the end of daily exercise and its benefits. Freddi tells how she carefully got started again:

“For more than 10 years, I jogged every day to clear the cobwebs and get my blood flowing. Imagine how awful I felt when I fell down the stairs and broke my ankle. At 54, I wasn’t ready to be a couch potato. After the cast came off, I had physical therapy. I worried about hurting my ankle again, but I wasn’t going to let the injury keep me down. At first, I walked slowly in my neighborhood, but I didn’t want to trip on uneven pavement. My physical therapist suggested I try a treadmill instead. Now, I go to the gym after work. I set the treadmill incline high, turn on my headphones, and walk. Sometimes, I listen to music or a book on CD. I miss the fresh air, but I don’t think about falling, and my stamina is back. Plus, I’ve added strength and balance exercises to my routine. In many ways, I’m in better shape now than before the fall and that feels great!”

### Reducing the Risks

Many people hesitate to exercise for one reason or another. In fact, exercise and moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking, are safe for almost all older adults. Even so, avoiding injury is an important thing to keep in mind, especially if you’re just starting a new activity or you haven’t been active for a long time. Talk to your doctor if you have an ongoing health condition or certain other health problems (see page 33) or if you haven’t seen your doctor for a while. Ask how physical activity can help you, whether you should avoid certain activities, and how to modify exercises to fit your situation.

You may feel some minor discomfort or muscle soreness when you start to exercise. This should go away as you get used to the activities. However, if you feel sick to your stomach or have strong pain, you’ve done too much. Go easier and then gradually build up.

# SAMPLE EXERCISES

Many different exercises can improve your health and independence. Whether you do the exercises show in this chapter or other physical activities that accomplish the same goals, gradually work your way up to include endurance, strength, balance, and stretching exercises.



It's important to spend about 5 minutes at the beginning and end of your routine to warm up and cool down. Warming up and cooling down give your muscles a chance to get ready to work and gradually return to rest at the end. These “before-and-after” activities help prevent injury and reduce muscle soreness later. Here are a few suggestions:

- Do some light endurance activity first, such as walking for 5 minutes. If you're going to be walking briskly or running, gradually build up to that pace. At the end of your activity, gradually slow down and let your body cool down.

- Do a few exercises to work the muscles and joints you'll be using in your activity. For example, if you're going to be swimming, do a few arm exercises first to warm up your arms and shoulders.
- If you're going to include stretching exercises as part of your routine, do them afterwards.



## How to Improve Your Endurance

Endurance exercises are activities — walking, jogging, swimming, raking, sweeping, dancing, playing tennis — that increase your heart rate and breathing for an extended period of time. They will make it easier for you to walk farther, faster, or uphill. They also should make everyday activities such as gardening, shopping, or playing a sport easier.

## How Much, How Often

Refer to your starting goals, and build up your endurance gradually. If you haven't been active for a long time, it's especially important to work your way up over time. It may take a while to go from a longstanding inactive lifestyle to doing some of the activities in this section. For example, start out with 5 or 10 minutes at a time, and then build up to at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity endurance activity. Doing less than 10 minutes at a time won't give you the desired heart and lung benefits.

**Try to build up to at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity endurance activity on most or all days of the week. Every day is best.** Remember, though, that these are goals, not rules. Some people will be able to do more.

## Counting Your Steps



Step counters can help you keep track of your endurance activity, set goals, and measure progress. Most inactive people get fewer than 5,000 steps a day, and some very inactive people get only 2,000 steps a day.

Wear the step counter for a few days to see how you're doing. You can use the **Endurance Daily Record** on page 105 to record your steps. If you get:

- Fewer than 5,000 steps a day, gradually try to add 3,000 to 4,000 more steps a day.
- About 8,000 steps a day, you're probably meeting the recommended activity target.
- 10,000 or more steps a day, you can be confident that you're getting an adequate amount of endurance activity.
- 10,000 steps a day comfortably, try for 15,000 steps a day, which would put you in the high-activity group.



**QUICK TIP**

Some people are afraid to exercise after a heart attack. But regular physical activity can help reduce your chances of having another heart attack.

If you've had a heart attack, talk with your doctor to be sure you're following a safe, effective physical activity program. Ask about cardiac rehab programs, which include exercise, education, and counseling to help you return to an active life.

## Making It REAL!

Walking 2 miles a day at the mall will help you keep up with your grandchildren during a trip to the park.

Others, however, may not be able to exercise for 30 minutes at a time. It's important to set realistic goals based on your own health and abilities.

### Safety

Listen to your body. Is the activity making you feel unwell or too tired? Endurance activities should not make you breathe so hard that you can't talk. They should not cause dizziness, chest pain or pressure, or a feeling like heartburn.

Do a little light activity, such as easy walking, before and after your endurance activities to warm up and cool down.

As you get older, you may not feel thirsty even though your body needs fluids. Be sure to drink liquids when doing any activity that makes you sweat. By the time you notice you are thirsty, you probably are already low on fluid. This guideline is important year round, but it's especially important in hot weather. If your doctor has told you to limit your fluids, be sure to check before increasing the amount of fluid you drink while exercising. For example, people with congestive heart failure or kidney disease may need to limit fluids.

Older adults can be affected by heat and cold more than others. In extreme cases, too much heat can cause heat stroke, and very cold temperatures can lead to a dangerous drop in body temperature. If you are going to be outdoors, dress in layers so you can add or remove clothes as needed. When it's not possible to be outdoors, you may want to try indoor activities:

- If you have stairs at home, go up and down the steps a few times in a row.
- Walk at the mall or grocery store.
- Go for a swim at your local fitness or recreation center.

Whatever activity you choose, stay safe. To prevent injuries, be sure to use safety equipment. For example, wear a helmet when bicycling. When you're walking, watch out for low-hanging branches and uneven sidewalks. Walk during the day or in well-lit areas at night, and be aware of your surroundings. Ask someone to go with you. Wear the proper shoes



## Progressing

When you're ready to do more, build up the amount of time you spend doing endurance activities first, then build up the difficulty of your activities. For example, gradually increase your time to 30 minutes over several days to weeks (or even months, depending on your condition) by walking longer distances.

Then walk more briskly or up steeper hills.



## Ways to Gauge Your Effort

The amount of effort you need to do an activity will depend on your starting point, including your fitness level, how strong you are, and how active you've been. For example, walking a mile in 15 minutes will be a lot easier for someone who does it every day compared with someone who has never done it. You can use these informal guidelines to estimate how much effort you are putting into your endurance activities:

- Brisk walking is an example of moderate activity, while jogging is a vigorous activity.
- Talking is easy during moderate activity. During vigorous activity, talking is difficult.
- If you tend to sweat, you probably won't sweat during light activity (except on hot days). You will sweat during vigorous or sustained moderate activity. Remember to drink fluids even if you don't sweat.

One doctor who specializes in exercise for older adults tells her patients the following about how hard they should work during endurance activities: "If you can't talk while you're exercising, it's too difficult. If you can sing a song, it's too easy!"



# strength

## How to Improve Your Strength

Even very small changes in muscle strength can make a real difference in function, especially in people who have already lost a lot of muscle. An increase in muscle that you can't even see can make it easier to do everyday things like get up from a chair, climb stairs, carry groceries, open jars, and even play with your grandchildren. Lower-body strength exercises also will improve your balance.

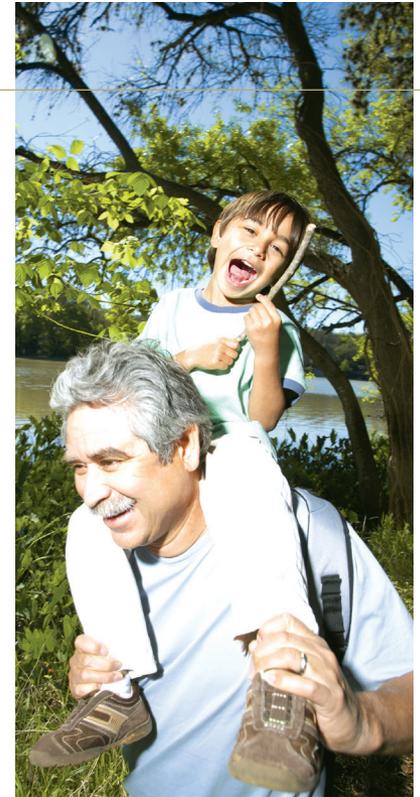
## About Strength Exercises

To do most of the strength exercises in this book, you need to lift or push weights. You can use weights, resistance bands, or common objects from your home. Or, you can use the strength-training equipment at a fitness center or gym. Start with light weights and gradually increase the amount of weight you use.

## How Much, How Often

Try to do strength exercises for all of your major muscle groups on **2 or more days per week for 30-minute sessions each**, but don't exercise the same muscle group on any 2 days in a row. (Use the **Weekly Exercise and Physical Activity Plan** on page 104.)

- Depending on your condition, you might need to start out using 1- or 2-pound weights, or no weight at all. Your body needs to get used to strength exercises.
- Use a light weight the first week, then gradually add more weight. Starting out with weights that are too heavy can cause injuries.



**QUICK TIP**

A repetition, or rep, is one complete movement of an exercise, and a set is one group of reps. In this guide, a set of strength exercises is 10 to 15 repetitions. You can use the **Strength and Balance Daily Record** on page 106 to keep track of the number of strength exercises you do.

## Making It REAL!

Want to be able to lift your carry-on bag into the overhead bin of the airplane or get in and out of the car more easily? Keep doing those strength exercises, and you'll get there.

- Gradually add more weight in order to benefit from strength exercises. You need to challenge your muscles to get the most benefit from strength exercises. (The Progressing section on page 43 will tell you how.)
- It should feel somewhere between hard and very hard for you to lift or push the weight. It shouldn't feel very, very hard. If you can't lift or push a weight 8 times in a row, it's too heavy for you. Reduce the amount of weight.
- Take 3 seconds to lift or push a weight into place, hold the position for 1 second, and take another 3 seconds to return to your starting position. Don't let the weight drop; returning it slowly is very important.
- Try to do 10 to 15 repetitions for each exercise. Think of this as a goal. If you can't do that many at first, do as many as you can. You may be able to build up to this goal over time.
- Don't hold your breath during strength exercises. Holding your breath while straining can cause changes in blood pressure. This is especially true for people with heart disease.
- Breathe regularly. Breathe in slowly through your nose and breathe out slowly through your mouth. If this is not comfortable or possible, breathe in and out through either your nose or mouth.
- Breathe out as you lift or push, and breathe in as you relax. For example, if you're doing leg lifts, breathe out as you lift your leg, and breathe in as you lower it. This may not feel natural at first, and you probably will have to think about it for a while as you do it.
- Proper form and safety go hand-in-hand. For some exercises, you may want to start alternating arms and work your way up to using both arms at the same time. If it is difficult for you to hold hand weights, try using wrist weights.
- To prevent injury, don't jerk or thrust weights into position. Use smooth, steady movements.
- Avoid "locking" your arm and leg joints in a tightly straightened position. To straighten your knees, tighten your thigh muscles. This will lift your kneecaps and protect them.

### Safety

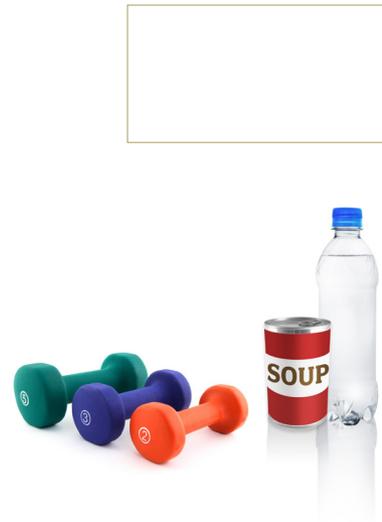
- Talk with your doctor if you are unsure about doing a particular exercise. For example, if you've had hip or back surgery, talk about which exercises might be best for you.

- For many of the sample exercises in this guide, you will need to use a chair. Choose a sturdy chair that is stable enough to support your weight when seated or when holding on during the exercise.
- Muscle soreness lasting a few days and slight fatigue are normal after muscle-building exercises, at least at first. After doing these exercises for a few weeks, you will probably not be sore after your workout.

## Progressing

Muscle strength is progressive over time. Gradually increase the amount of weight you use to build strength. When you can do 2 sets of 10 to 15 repetitions easily, increase the amount of weight at your next session.

Here's an example of how to progress gradually: Start out with a weight that you can lift only 8 times. Keep using that weight until you become strong enough to lift it easily 10 to 15 times. When you can do 2 sets of 10 to 15 repetitions easily, add more weight so that, again, you can lift it only 8 times. Keep repeating until you reach your goal, and then maintain that level as long as you can.



## QUICK TIP

Challenge yourself, but listen to your body, and use common sense when you exercise.



If you feel sick or have pain during or after exercise, you're doing too much.



Exhaustion, sore joints, and painful muscle pulling mean you're overdoing it. None of the exercises should cause severe pain.



Over-exercising can cause injury, which may lead to quitting altogether. A steady rate of progress is the best approach.

## Working with a Resistance Band

Resistance bands are stretchy elastic bands that come in several strengths, from light to heavy. You can use them in some strength exercises instead of weights.

### Wrapping a resistance band



1. Lay the band flat in your hand with the end toward your pinky finger.
2. Wrap the long end of the band around the back of your hand.
3. Grasp firmly.

**TIP**

If you are a beginner, try exercising without the band until you are comfortable, then add the band. Choose a light band if you are just starting to exercise, and move on to a stronger band when you can do 2 sets of 10 to 15 repetitions easily. Hold on to the band tightly (some bands have handles), or wrap it around your hand or foot to keep it from slipping and causing possible injury. Do the exercises in a slow, controlled manner, and don't let the band snap back.

## Working with Weights

You don't have to go out and buy weights for strength exercises. Find something you can hold on to easily. For example, you can make your own weights from unbreakable household items:

- Fill a plastic milk jug with sand or water and tape the opening securely closed.
- Fill a sock with dried beans, and tie up the open end.
- Use common grocery items, such as bags of rice, vegetable or soup cans, or bottled water.



## Hand Grip

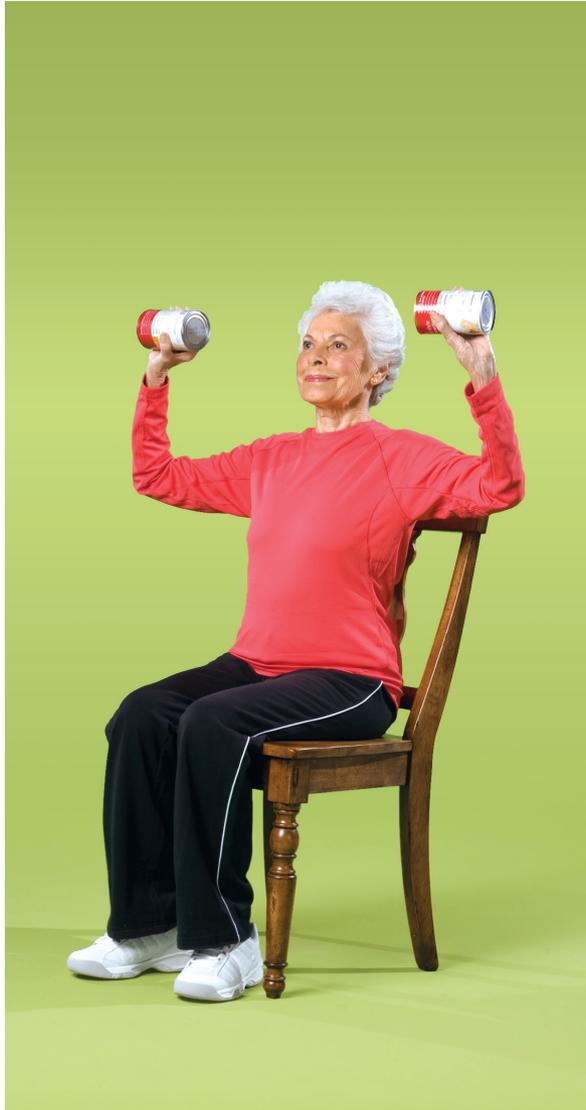
This simple exercise should help if you have trouble picking things up or holding on to them. It also will help you open things like that pickle jar more easily. You can even do this exercise while reading or watching TV.

1. Hold a tennis ball or other small rubber or foam ball in one hand.
2. Slowly squeeze the ball as hard as you can and hold it for 3-5 seconds.
3. Relax the squeeze slowly.
4. Repeat 10-15 times.
5. Repeat 10-15 times with other hand.
6. Repeat 10-15 times more with each hand.



This exercise will strengthen your shoulders and arms. It should make swimming and other activities such as lifting and carrying grandchildren easier.

## Overhead Arm Raise



1. You can do this exercise while standing or sitting in a sturdy, armless chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Hold weights at your sides at shoulder height with palms facing forward. Breathe in slowly.
4. Slowly breathe out as you raise both arms up over your head keeping your elbows slightly bent.
5. Hold the position for 1 second.
6. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arms.
7. Repeat 10-15 times.
8. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

**TIP**

As you progress, use a heavier weight and alternate arms until you can lift the weight comfortably with both arms.

# Front Arm Raise

This exercise for your shoulders can help you put things up on a shelf or take them down more easily.

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold weights straight down at your sides, with palms facing backward.
3. Keeping them straight, breathe out as you raise both arms in front of you to shoulder height.
4. Hold the position for 1 second.
5. Breathe in as you slowly lower arms.
6. Repeat 10-15 times.
7. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

**TIP**

As you progress, use a heavier weight and alternate arms until you can lift the weight comfortably with both arms.



# Arm Curl

After a few weeks of doing this exercise for your upper arm muscles, lifting that gallon of milk will be much easier.

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold weights straight down at your sides, palms facing forward. Breathe in slowly.
3. Breathe out as you slowly bend your elbows and lift weights toward chest. Keep elbows at your sides.
4. Hold the position for 1 second.
5. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arms.
6. Repeat 10-15 times.
7. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

**TIP**

As you progress, use a heavier weight and alternate arms until you can lift the weight comfortably with both arms.



## SAMPLE EXERCISES

These push-ups will strengthen your arms, shoulders, and chest.  
Try this exercise during a TV commercial break.

### Wall Push-Up



1. Face a wall, standing a little farther than arm's length away, feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean your body forward and put your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
3. Slowly breathe in as you bend your elbows and lower your upper body toward the wall in a slow, controlled motion. Keep your feet flat on the floor.
4. Hold the position for 1 second.
5. Breathe out and slowly push yourself back until your arms are straight.
6. Repeat 10-15 times.
7. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

# Elbow Extension

This exercise will strengthen your upper arms. If your shoulders aren't flexible enough to do this exercise, try the **Chair Dip**

1. You can do this exercise while standing or sitting in a sturdy, armless chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Hold weight in one hand with palm facing inward. Raise that arm toward ceiling.
4. Support this arm below elbow with other hand. Breathe in slowly.
5. Slowly bend raised arm at elbow and bring weight toward shoulder.
6. Hold position for 1 second.
7. Breathe out and slowly straighten your arm over your head. Be careful not to lock your elbow.
8. Repeat 10-15 times.
9. Repeat 10-15 times with other arm.
10. Repeat 10-15 more times with each arm.

**TIP**

If it's difficult for you to hold hand weights, try using wrist weights.



## SAMPLE EXERCISES

This pushing motion will strengthen your arm muscles even if you are not able to lift yourself up off the chair.

### Chair Dip



1. Sit in a sturdy chair with armrests with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean slightly forward; keep your back and shoulders straight.
3. Grasp arms of chair with your hands next to you. Breathe in slowly.
4. Breathe out and use your arms to push your body slowly off the chair.
5. Hold position for 1 second.
6. Breathe in as you slowly lower yourself back down.
7. Repeat 10-15 times.
8. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

This exercise strengthens your buttocks and lower back. For an added challenge, you can modify the exercise to improve your balance.

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly lift one leg straight back without bending your knee or pointing your toes. Try not to lean forward. The leg you are standing on should be slightly bent.
3. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower your leg.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.
6. Repeat 10-15 times with other leg.
7. Repeat 10-15 more times with each leg.

**TIP**

As you progress, you may want to add ankle weights.



## Back Leg Raise



## Knee Curl

**TIP**

As you progress, you may want to add ankle weights.

This exercise strengthens your thighs and may reduce symptoms of arthritis of the knee.

## Leg Straightening

1. Sit in a sturdy chair with your back supported by the chair. Only the balls of your feet and your toes should rest on the floor. Put a rolled bath towel at the edge of the chair under thighs for support. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly extend one leg in front of you as straight as possible, but don't lock your knee.
3. Flex foot to point toes toward the ceiling. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower leg back down.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.
6. Repeat 10-15 times with other leg.
7. Repeat 10-15 more times with each leg.

**TIP**

As you progress, you may want to add ankle weights.



# Balance



## How to Improve Your Balance

Each year, more than 2 million older Americans go to the emergency room because of fall-related injuries. A simple fall can cause a serious fracture of the arm, hand, ankle, or hip. Balance exercises can help you prevent falls and avoid the disability that may result from falling.

## Safety

- Have a sturdy chair or a person nearby to hold on to if you feel unsteady.
- Talk with your doctor if you are unsure about doing a particular exercise.

**TIP** People with back problems should start the exercise from the sitting upright position.

## Progressing

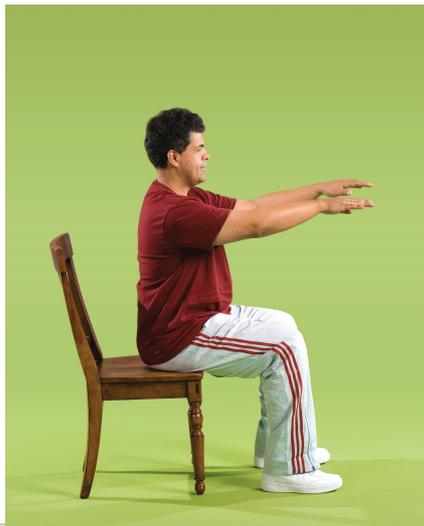
These exercises can improve your balance even more if you modify them as you progress. Start by holding on to a sturdy chair for support. To challenge yourself, try holding on to the chair with only one hand; then with time, you can try holding on with only one finger, then no hands. If you are steady on your feet, try doing the exercise with your eyes closed.

## Anytime, Anywhere Balance Exercises

You can do exercises to improve your balance almost anytime, anywhere, and as often as you like, as long as you have something sturdy nearby to hold on to if you become unsteady. In the beginning, using a chair or the wall for support will help you work on your balance safely.

## Making It REAL!

You're walking in the neighborhood and you hear a bicycle bell behind you. Knowing you can turn around quickly and move out of the way without losing your balance is a great feeling!



Good balance helps you walk safely and avoid tripping and falling over objects in your way.

## Balance Walk

1. Raise arms to sides, shoulder height.
2. Choose a spot ahead of you and focus on it to keep you steady as you walk.
3. Walk in a straight line with one foot in front of the other.
4. As you walk, lift your back leg. Pause for 1 second before stepping forward.
5. Repeat for 20 steps, alternating legs.



As you progress, try looking from side to side as you walk, but skip this step if you have inner ear problems.



## Making It REAL!

How easy is it for you to turn around and look behind you before backing out of a parking space? What about bending down to tie your shoes? Flexibility exercises will help you do both more easily!



### How to Improve Your Flexibility

Stretching, or flexibility, exercises are an important part of your physical activity program. They give you more freedom of movement for your physical activities and for everyday activities such as getting dressed and reaching objects on a shelf. Stretching exercises can improve your flexibility but will not improve your endurance or strength.

### How Much, How Often

- Do each stretching exercise 3 to 5 times at each session.
- Slowly stretch into the desired position, as far as possible without pain, and hold the stretch for 10 to 30 seconds. Relax, breathe, then repeat, trying to stretch farther.

### Safety

- Talk with your doctor if you are unsure about a particular exercise. For example, if you've had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before doing lower-body exercises.
- Always warm up before stretching exercises. Stretch after endurance or strength exercises. If you are doing only stretching exercises, warm up with a few

minutes of easy walking first. Stretching your muscles before they are warmed up may result in injury.

- Always remember to breathe normally while holding a stretch.
- Stretching may feel slightly uncomfortable; for example, a mild pulling feeling is normal.
- You are stretching too far if you feel sharp or stabbing pain, or joint pain — while doing the stretch or even the next day. Reduce the stretch so that it doesn't hurt.
- Never “bounce” into a stretch. Make slow, steady movements instead. Jerking into position can cause muscles to tighten, possibly causing injury.
- Avoid “locking” your joints. Straighten your arms and legs when you stretch them, but don't hold them tightly in a straight position. Your joints should always be slightly bent while stretching.

### Progressing

You can progress in your stretching exercises. For example, as you become more flexible, try reaching farther, but not so far that it hurts.

# Neck

This easy stretch can help relieve tension in your neck. Try to stretch after strength training and during any activity that makes you feel stiff, such as sitting at a desk.



1. You can do this stretch while standing or sitting in a sturdy chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Slowly turn your head to the right until you feel a slight stretch. Be careful not to tip or tilt your head forward or backward, but hold it in a comfortable position.
4. Hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
5. Turn your head to the left and hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.

# Upper Body

This exercise increases the flexibility of your arms, chest, and shoulders, and will help you reach items on the upper shelves of your closet or kitchen cabinet.

1. Stand facing a wall slightly farther than arm's length from the wall, feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean your body forward and put your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
3. Keeping your back straight, slowly walk your hands up the wall until your arms are above your head.
4. Hold your arms overhead for about 10-30 seconds.
5. Slowly walk your hands back down.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.

**TIP**

As you progress, the goal is to reach higher.



This exercise will help you do activities that require you to twist or turn to look behind you, such as backing out of a parking space or swinging a golf club. **If you've had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before trying this stretch.**



1. Sit up toward the front of a sturdy chair with armrests. Stay as straight as possible. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Slowly twist to the left from your waist without moving your hips. Turn your head to the left. Lift your left hand and hold on to the left arm of the chair. Place your right hand on the outside of your left thigh. Twist farther, if possible.
3. Hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
4. Slowly return to face forward.
5. Repeat on the right side.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 more times.



## Back

### TIP

As you progress, try lifting your left arm and resting it comfortably on the back of the chair. Hold on to the left armrest with your right arm. Repeat on right side.



1. Sit securely toward the front of a sturdy, armless chair with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Slowly bend forward from your hips. Keep your back and neck straight.
3. Slightly relax your neck and lower your chin. Slowly bend farther forward and slide your hands down your legs toward your shins. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort.
4. Hold for 10-30 seconds.
5. Straighten up slowly all the way to the starting position.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.

This exercise stretches your ankle muscles. You can stretch both ankles at once or one at a time.

## Ankle



1. Sit securely toward the edge of a sturdy, armless chair.
2. Stretch your legs out in front of you.
3. With your heels on the floor, bend your ankles to point toes toward you.
4. Hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
5. Bend ankles to point toes away from you and hold for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.

## About Floor Exercises

### To Get Down on the Floor:

1. Stand facing the seat of a sturdy chair.
2. Put your hands on the seat, and lower yourself down on one knee.
3. Bring the other knee down.
4. Put your left hand on the floor. Leaning on your hand, slowly bring your left hip to the floor. Put your right hand on the floor next to your left hand to steady yourself, if needed.
5. You should now be sitting with your weight on your left hip.
6. Straighten your legs.
7. Bend your left elbow until your weight is resting on it. Using your right hand as needed for support, straighten your left arm. You should now be lying on your left side.
8. Roll onto your back.

**TIP**

You don't have to use your left side. You can use your right side, if you prefer.



## Back of Leg

1. Lie on your back with left knee bent and left foot flat on the floor.
2. Raise right leg, keeping knee slightly bent.
3. Reach up and grasp right leg with both hands. Keep head and shoulders flat on the floor.
4. Gently pull right leg toward your body until you feel a stretch in the back of your leg.
5. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.
7. Repeat at least 3-5 times with left leg.

This exercise stretches the muscles in the back of your legs. If you've had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before trying this stretch.



1. Sit sideways on a bench or other hard surface, such as two chairs placed together.
2. Keeping back straight, stretch one leg out on the bench, toes pointing up.
3. Keep other foot flat on the floor.
4. If you feel a stretch at this point, hold position for 10-30 seconds.
5. If you don't feel a stretch, lean forward from hips (not waist) until you feel stretching in the leg on the bench.
6. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
7. Repeat at least 3-5 times.
8. Repeat at least 3-5 times with your other leg.

Here's another exercise that stretches your thigh muscles.  
If you've had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before trying this stretch.

## Thigh Standing

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees straight, but not locked.
2. Hold on to the chair for balance with your right hand.
3. Bend your left leg back and grab your foot in your left hand. Keep your knee pointed to the floor. If you can't grab your ankle, loop a resistance band, belt, or towel around your foot and hold both ends.
4. Gently pull your leg until you feel a stretch in your thigh.
5. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.
7. Repeat at least 3-5 times with your right leg.



This exercise stretches the muscles of your lower back. If you've had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before trying this stretch.



## Lower Back

1. Lie on your back with your legs together, knees bent, and feet flat on the floor. Try to keep both arms and shoulders flat on the floor throughout the stretch.
2. Keeping knees bent and together, slowly lower both legs to one side as far as you comfortably can.
3. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
4. Bring legs back up slowly and repeat toward other side.
5. Continue alternating sides for at least 3-5 times on each side.

This is a good over-all stretch that's fun to do with a partner. It stretches your shoulders, arms, back, and legs. If you've had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before trying this stretch.



## Buddy Stretch

1. Sit on the floor facing your buddy and place your feet against your partner's feet.
2. Both of you should grab one end of a resistance band or towel. Depending on each person's flexibility, you may need to loop two bands or towels together.
3. Slowly pull the band or towel so that your buddy bends forward and you lean backward.
4. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
5. Slowly return to starting position.
6. Now it's your buddy's turn to pull the band or towel so that you bend forward and your buddy leans backward. Hold for 10-30 seconds, and then return to starting position.
7. Repeat at least 3-5 times.

### TIP

As you progress, try holding the band so that your hands are closer to your buddy's, or try using a heavier strength band. Some people may be able to do the stretch by reaching out and holding hands during the stretch.

# How Am I Doing?

If you've been exercising regularly, you'll soon be able to tell when it's time to move ahead in your activities. For example, when you can lift a weight easily more than 10 times, it's time to add more weight in your strength exercises. And when your endurance activity no longer feels challenging, it's time to exercise a little longer, or make it a little more difficult, such as by walking up steeper hills.

## Test Me

**Endurance.** Pick a fixed course — the distance from your house to the corner, once around the track at your local high school, or from one end of the mall to the other — whatever is convenient. See how long it takes to walk that distance. Do this test every month or so. As your endurance improves, it should take less time.

**Upper-body Strength.** Count the number of arm curls (see page 50) you can safely do in 2 minutes. If you are just starting to exercise, you may have to stop and rest before the 2 minutes are up. That's okay; it still gives you a great starting point to measure your progress. Repeat the test 1 month later. The number of arm curls you can do should increase.

**Lower-body Strength.** Count the number of chair stands (see page 60) you can safely do in 2 minutes. You may have to stop and rest before the 2 minutes are up if you are just starting to exercise. That's okay; you will be able to measure your progress from this starting point. Repeat the test 1 month later. The number of chair stands you can do should increase.

**Balance.** Time yourself as you stand on one foot, without support, for as long as possible. Stand near something sturdy to hold on to, in case you lose your balance. Record your score. Repeat the test while standing on the other foot. Test yourself again in 1 month. The amount of time you can stand on one foot should increase.

**Flexibility.** If you've had hip or back surgery talk

**with your doctor before you do this test.**

Sit securely toward the front of a sturdy chair, and stretch one leg straight out in front of you with your heel on the floor, toes pointing upward. Bend the other leg so that your foot is flat on the floor. With your elbows slightly bent and your hands palms down, slowly bend forward from your hips (not your waist) and reach as far as you can toward your toes.

How far down can you reach until you feel a stretch? Test yourself again in 1 month. Eventually, you should be able to reach closer to your toes.



## KEEP GOING

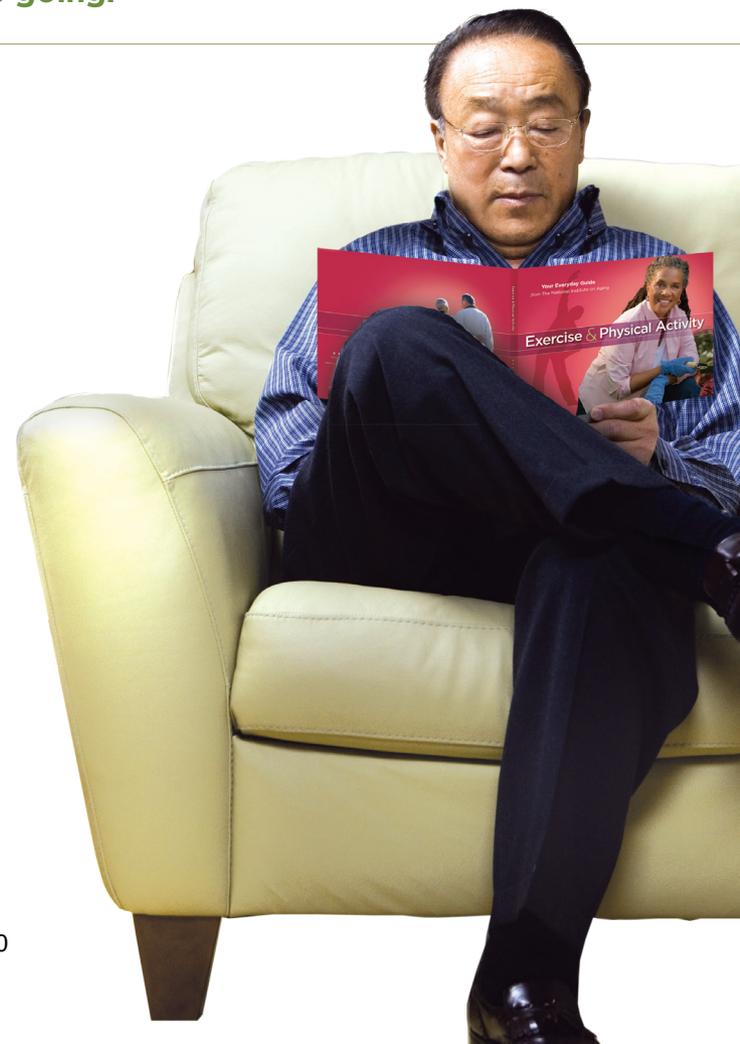
**Physical activity is a great way to have fun, be with friends and family, enjoy the outdoors, improve your fitness for your favorite sport, and maintain your independence. Older adults also gain substantial health benefits from regular physical activity, and these benefits last even into old age. The best way to be physically active is to make it a lifelong habit. Once you get started, keep going.**

Often, people decide to become more active and follow a healthy eating plan because they want to control their weight. For many people, these healthy habits do result in weight loss, but that's only part of the big picture. Healthy eating and physical activity help you become physically fit and stay healthy.

Think about other lifestyle changes you can make, too. For example, smoking leads to a variety of serious diseases and can keep you from being active. So does drinking too much alcohol. Together, habits like physical activity, a healthful diet, drinking in moderation, and not smoking will help you achieve the main goal: the best of health.

### TIP

Use the worksheets on the next few pages of this Guide to set your exercise and physical activity goals and keep track of your progress. Make copies of the blank worksheets so you can update them as you progress.





# Activity Log

For a couple of weekdays and a weekend, write down how much time you are physically active (for example, walking, gardening, playing a sport, dancing, lifting weights). The goal is to find ways to increase your activity.

	Activity	Number of Minutes	Ways to Increase Activity
<b>Weekday 1</b>			

Total Minutes \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Weekday 2</b>			

Total Minutes \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Weekend</b>			

Total Minutes \_\_\_\_\_



# Goal-Setting Worksheet

Your success depends on setting goals that really matter to you. Write down your goals, put them where you can see them, and renew them regularly.

## Short-term Goals

Write down at least two of your own personal short-term goals. What will you do over the next week or two that will help you make physical activity a regular part of your life?

1.

2.

3.

## Long-term Goals

Write down at least two long-term goals. Focus on where you want to be in 6 months, a year, or 2 years from now. Remember, setting goals will help you make physical activity part of your everyday life, monitor your progress, and celebrate your success.

1.

2.

3.

# Weekly Exercise and Physical Activity Plan

Use this form to make your own exercise and physical activity plan — one you think you really can manage. Update your plan as you progress. Aim for moderate-intensity endurance activities on most or all days of the week. **Try to do strength exercises for all of your major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week, but don't exercise the same muscle group 2 days in a row.** For example, do upper-body strength exercises on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and lower-body strength exercises on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Or, you can do strength exercises of all of your muscle groups every other day. Don't forget to include balance and flexibility exercises.

Week of _____	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Endurance							
Upper-Body Strength							
Lower-Body Strength							
Balance							
Flexibility							

