

# Get Active for Your Health



Being physically active is one of the most important things you can do for yourself. No matter your age, size, or level of fitness, your body needs to move!

**"If exercise could be packed in a pill, it would be the single most widely prescribed and beneficial medication in the nation."**

- ROBERT BUTLER, MD, author, *The Longevity Prescription*

# Benefits of physical activity

- Helps prevent diabetes
- Lowers blood sugar, cholesterol, and blood pressure
- Lowers the risk of heart disease
- Lowers the risk of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia
- Gives you energy
- Helps control weight
- Improves sleep
- Reduces stress and lifts your mood
- Lowers the risk of colon and breast cancer

**Adults need at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity 5 or more days of the week.** *Moderate intensity* means exercising hard enough that you can talk, but can’t sing. You can also get the same benefit by doing a strenuous activity (like running or swimming laps) for 75 minutes a week.

## Activity Levels and Examples

Light	Moderate	Strenuous
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not sweating</li><li>• Not breathing hard</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A light sweat</li><li>• Can talk, but can’t sing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sweating</li><li>• Breathing hard</li><li>• Can’t talk or sing</li></ul>
Slow walking or dancing, yoga, ping pong, bowling	Dancing, swimming, walking fast, biking, mowing the lawn	Running, high-impact aerobic dancing, biking uphill, swimming laps

# Three types of physical activity

## Aerobic Activity (Cardio)

Aerobic activity uses large muscle groups, such as your arms and legs, and it burns fat and sugar for energy. It increases your heart and breathing rate.

### Examples of Aerobic Activity:

- Brisk walking
- Running
- Swimming
- Hiking
- Biking
- Dancing
- Basketball
- Tennis
- Rollerblading or roller skating



## Strength Training

Strength training, such as weight lifting, builds muscle tone and strength. It improves posture and helps you avoid injury to your bones and muscles. Aim for 20 minutes of strength-training exercises at least 2 days a week. Work all the major muscle groups. Wait 48 hours before you work a muscle group again.

To learn more, go to [kp.org/fitness](http://kp.org/fitness).

## Flexibility

After you have warmed up a little, stretch to get more flexible and lower the risk of muscle strain and injury. Spend 5 to 10 minutes each day stretching the major muscle groups. Move slowly as you stretch each muscle. Stretch until you feel a slight pulling sensation, but not pain. Breathe as you stretch, and hold the stretch for at least 20 seconds. To learn more, go to [kp.org/fitness](https://kp.org/fitness).

## Getting started

Go slow when you start any new physical activity. To help avoid injury, start out slowly to give your muscles a chance to warm up. End with a 5- to 10-minute cooldown by gradually slowing your pace. For example, if your activity is a fast walk, walk slowly for 5 minutes at the beginning and end of your workout.

## What Would Help You to Get Moving?

We all have reasons why we don't exercise. Look at this list to find strategies to help you move more.

### Find time to be active

- Do three 10-minute bouts of exercise instead of one 30-minute bout.
- Park your car farther away and walk.
- Take the stairs.
- Schedule time on your calendar.
- Take a walk break at work.
- Walk, dance, stretch, or lift weights while watching TV.

## Energize yourself

- If you feel tired, start with just 5 minutes, and then see if you have the energy to do more.
- Regular exercise can give you more energy.
- Exercise improves sleep.

## Find safe ways to move

- If you have limited mobility, try water aerobics, swimming, tai chi, or a seated fitness video. Check for fitness DVDs at your local Kaiser Permanente Healthy Living Store or go to [kp.org/healthybalance](http://kp.org/healthybalance) for resources.

## Make being active fun

- It's hard to keep up something you don't like doing. Plan ways to be active with your family and friends just to have fun, like playing Frisbee at a park or the beach.
- Try a free trial class like Zumba or yoga at a park or gym.
- Take your dog (or a shelter dog!) for a walk.



## **“Just getting going—getting off the couch— is the biggest step.”**

- ROBERT SALLIS, MD, Kaiser Permanente family physician, and  
past president, American College of Sports Medicine

### **Be active without spending a lot**

- Walk in a mall or go up and down stairs.
- Try the exercise equipment and jogging paths at your local park.
- Dance or walk briskly in your home.
- Use soup cans or water bottles as weights at home.
- Check out a fitness DVD from your local library.

### **Plan for indoor workouts, too**

- Walk in a mall or go up and down stairs.
- Dance or walk briskly in your home.
- Use a workout DVD or app at home.
- Join a gym or take a Zumba class.





## A Note on Safety

- Drink plenty of water in hot weather.
- Wear supportive, comfortable shoes.
- If you have a health problem like heart disease, high blood pressure, or diabetes, ask your doctor about the type and amount of physical activity that's right for you. In most cases, you don't need to talk to your doctor before starting an activity like walking.
- If you don't feel well, slow or stop exercise.
- If you notice any unusual symptoms (such as pain or shortness of breath), stop exercising and see your doctor before you exercise again.
- **If you have continuous pain or pressure in your chest, neck, arm, or jaw during exercise, stop and call 911.**





# Resources

## Kaiser Permanente

Kaiser Permanente has many resources to help you increase your physical activity. Learn more at [kp.org/fitness](https://kp.org/fitness).

## Community

Check out the community resources in your area, such as your local YMCA, park, or senior center.

## Websites

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov/physicalactivity](https://cdc.gov/physicalactivity)
- Every Body Walk: [everybodywalk.org](https://everybodywalk.org)
- President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition: [fitness.gov](https://fitness.gov)

**"If there were one single thing you could do to dramatically improve your health, there is no doubt it would be exercise."**

- ROBERT SALLIS, MD, Kaiser Permanente family physician, and past president, American College of Sports Medicine





