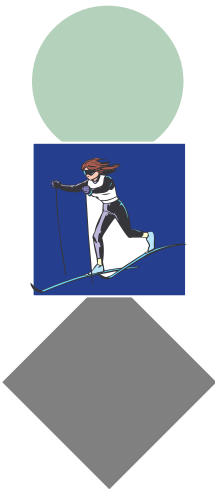


Preparing to be more physically active?



Most of my day is spent sitting although I do some leisure time physical activity like gardening and yard work about three times per week. I also take small breaks during my workday to move around, but finding 30 minutes a day seems very challenging to me.

Keep up the good work! It sounds like you have formed some healthy habits already. Remember to focus on these successful behaviors. Sticking to a more structured physical activity plan on a few days per week may be easier than you think.

How Active Are You?

The US Surgeon General recommends that we accumulate 30 minutes (60 minutes for children and adolescents) of moderate physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week. That's just three, 10-minute brisk walks per day.

Why Do I Need to be Physically Active?

Since you are somewhat active already, you know that physical activity increases energy, helps you to sleep more peacefully and reduces anxiety and stress. Benefits of being more physically active include:

- Feeling better
- Reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke
- Reduces the risk of diabetes and cancer
- Lowers blood pressure and cholesterol
- Improves your balance and coordination

To meet the 30 minutes on most days recommendation, try adding some of these ideas:

- Create a 10-minute morning stretching or strength routine before breakfast. If it is done first thing in the morning, you are more apt to stick with it.
- Find a walking partner or start a small walking group at work to walk a couple of times per week with you at noon.
- Check the TV listings for exercise shows on television and keep consistent by doing it on the same day and time each week. It is important to find one that you enjoy, so try a few before making a commitment.

- Make a personal or family commitment to try a fun, new activity each season.
- Join a sports league, yoga or aerobics class at the local community center or YMCA.
- Make an effort to walk or bike to do errands whenever possible. In rural areas this may mean driving and parking your car just outside the village center and then walking or biking to the bank, post office, library, etc. A backpack can be helpful.
- Buy a strength training video and some dumbbells and use them two times per week before dinner. Swap videos with friends or use the local library to keep costs down.
- Leave a pair of sneakers and a t-shirt in your car so you will always be ready for a quick walk.

How can I get more motivated?

- Have a friend or family member join you. You'll be less likely to skip a walk or bike ride knowing someone is waiting for you.
- Set a realistic goal, write it down, and post it where you will see it frequently.
- Set yourself up on a reward system. Each time you reach a goal, buy yourself something that supports your efforts like a new exercise tape, video or walking gear.
- Keep a journal and write down the activity you do each day and how you felt doing it. Read it when you need inspiration.
- It takes a lot of attempts to stick with it so keep trying even if you get off track.

