
The Power of Movement: Living an Active Lifestyle

“Lack of activity destroys the good condition of every human being, while movement and methodical physical exercise save it and preserve it.” —Plato

Being consistently active helps you to live longer, have a better quality of life, improve your mental health, and improve your self-image. Adults should aim for either 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week, 75 minutes of high-intensity activity, or a combination of both.

You can make big improvements to your health and energy levels by incorporating exercise and physical activity throughout your week. Some people feel daunted by the thought of adding physical activity or don't know where to begin. Here are a few tips to support your journey:

Emphasize fun. What is something you love? Whether that's music, birds, friends, trampolines, or books, you can shape your activity plan around the things you love. Walk to and from a spot where you can listen to the birds every day; explore local libraries from top to bottom; take the stairs when you visit friends; take a dance class that incorporates music you love. Make the things you love part of your activity plan.

Create a plan Create a plan and carve out time for physical activity and exercise throughout the week. If you block time on your schedule for activity, it is much more likely to happen. Spread your exercise minutes throughout the week. Two 20-minute high-intensity interval training sessions, a one hour family bike ride, and a 20 minute jog is a good example of how you can meet the amount of activity recommended.

Involve others. Chances are, your friends, family, and co-workers want to be more active too. Set active living goals together and aim for gradual advancement and increased variety in your routine. You could walk an extra two miles a week—or three more flights of stairs. Try to keep moving by walking instead of sitting at the coffeeshop, or walk around the block while catching up with a friend. Many cities have active groups like running or hiking clubs which can be great in your home town or when traveling to keep you moving.

Add an accountability partner. Share your goals with a person you trust and ask them to help keep you accountable by checking in. It can be helpful to partner with a friend or family member who has similar interests to engage in activity together and keep each other accountable. Online groups may also





be a great option here to help you meet and achieve your goals. Social media offers many forums where individuals can post goals, encourage each other, and create a community around an active lifestyle.

Set goals Goal setting can be a fantastic tool to help you on your fitness journey. Be sure to set SMART goals which stands for: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based. Post your goal in a visible area and check in with it often. Share your goal with your friends, family, and accountability partner. Perhaps your goal is to run a 5k by the end of the year. Set smaller SMART goals that can serve as milestones to help you make progress towards a larger goal.

Track your progress. Consider using a pedometer app on your phone or purchasing a simple pedometer and have fun with it. How many steps do you take on an average work day? How many do you take on the weekend? Striving for 10,000 steps a day is recommended. However, some is better than none. Many apps will track a variety of activity and health metrics. In addition to daily steps, many will track your total activity at different intensities each week. This can keep you on track to reaching your movement target each week.

Be forgiving and flexible. If you have a sedentary day, let it go. Check in with your body and goals and make adjustments as needed. Sometimes work and life gets hectic. Adjust your goals as needed and find creative ways to be active like walking or jogging around a park while your child is at soccer practice. It is about progress, not perfection.

Daily movement reduces the risk of many health conditions. If you already have a condition, movement reduces the symptoms. Research shows that movement helps with conditions across a broad range:

- Many forms of cancer
- Symptoms of depression, stress, and anxiety
- Cardiometabolic diseases including prediabetes, diabetes, high blood pressure, and stroke
- Musculoskeletal health, including osteoporosis and rheumatoid arthritis

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