



BROUGHT TO YOU BY AMERICA'S FAMILY PHYSICIANS

HEALTHY AGING: STAYING ACTIVE

DO YOU FEEL AS GOOD NOW AS YOU DID AT AGE 40? AT AGE 50?

If the answer is no, read on. You might be able to feel as good as you used to (or even better) by picking up a few new healthy habits. It may seem like more trouble than it's worth to start doing something new. However, even small changes can improve your health. One small change you can make is to add some activity to your daily life.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO GET PHYSICALLY ACTIVE NOW?

For most people, walking is one of the easiest activities to do. Experts recommend at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week, but you don't have to do all 30 minutes at once. Try walking for 15 minutes twice each day or for 10 minutes 3 times each day.

People who have started being physically active later in life say that exercising with a partner is motivation to stick with it. Some suggest starting or joining a walking group with friends or neighbors. Others suggest getting a dog that needs to be walked.

WHAT IF I'VE NEVER BEEN VERY ACTIVE? WILL STARTING NOW REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Yes! Physical activity is good for people at any age. Among older adults, falls are a common cause of injury and disability. Physical activity makes your bones and muscles stronger. When your muscles are strong, you're less likely to fall. If you do fall, strong bones are less likely to break. Regular physical activity is also good for your brain. Studies have shown that people who do simple exercises (for example, walking briskly) on a regular basis are better able to make decisions than people who aren't physically active.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

If you are not already active, begin slowly. Start with exercises that you are already comfortable doing. Starting slowly makes it less likely that you will injure yourself. Starting slowly also helps prevent soreness. You do not have to exercise at a high intensity to get most health benefits. For example, walking is an excellent activity to start with. As you become used to exercising, or if you are already active, you can slowly increase the intensity of your exercise program.

I HAVEN'T BEEN PHYSICALLY ACTIVE IN A LONG TIME. I'M AFRAID I'LL GET HURT WHEN I START.

From diabetes to heart disease, many chronic (ongoing) health problems are improved by even moderate amounts of physical activity. For people who have these conditions, a lack of exercise is a bigger risk than an exercise-related injury.

Talk with your doctor about your plans before you get started. Your muscles will very likely be sore when you first increase your physical activity, but don't consider that a reason to stop. Mild soreness will go away in a few days as you become more used to exercise.

SUGGESTED EXERCISES

The following exercises are some simple strength exercises that you can do at home. Each exercise should be done 8 to 10 times for 2 sets. Remember to:

- Complete all movements in a slow, controlled fashion.
- Don't hold your breath.
- Stop if you feel pain.
- Stretch each muscle after your workout.

WALL PUSHUPS

Place hands flat against the wall. Slowly lower body to the wall. Push body away from wall to return to starting position.

BICEP CURLS

Hold a weight in each hand with your arms at your sides. Bending your arms at the elbows, lift the weights to your shoulders and then lower them to your sides.

CHAIR SQUATS

Begin by sitting in the chair. Lean slightly forward and stand up from the chair. Try not to favor one side or use your hands to help you.

SHOULDER SHRUGS

Hold a weight in each hand with your arms at your side. Shrug your shoulders up toward your ears and then lower them back down.

How active you are is a habit. Adopting healthy habits can be tough at first. But by starting small and rewarding yourself for each step you take, you can make a difference in how good you feel. You may find it easier to be more physically active if you think of every day and every meal as a chance to do something good for yourself.

