FITNESS

A Healthy Habit to Start and Keep

How much exercise do I need?
Talk to your doctor about how much exercise is right for you. To sustain good health a person should participate in at least 30 minutes of moderate activity five days per week or 20 minutes of vigorous activity three times per week. Remember, though, that exercise has so many benefits that any amount is better than none.

How do I get started?
Start by talking with your doctor. This is especially important if you haven't been active, if you have any health problems, or if you're pregnant or elderly. Start out slowly. If you've been inactive for years, you can't run the Boston Marathon after 2 weeks of training. Begin with a 10-minute period of light exercise or a brisk walk every day and gradually increase how hard you exercise and for how long.

How do I stick with it?

1. **Choose something you like to do and make it fun.**
   Make sure it suits you physically, too. For instance, swimming is easier on arthritic joints.

2. **Get a partner.**
   Exercising with someone else can make it more fun.

3. **Vary your routine.**
   You may be less likely to get bored or injured if you change your routine. Walk one day. Bicycle the next. Consider activities like dancing and racquet sports, and even chores like chopping wood.

4. **Choose a comfortable time of day.**
   Don't work out too soon after eating or when it's too hot or cold outside. Wait until later in the day if you're too stiff in the morning.

5. **Don't get discouraged.**
   It can take weeks or months before you notice some of the changes from exercise.

6. **Forget "no pain, no gain."**
   While a little soreness is normal after you first start exercising, pain isn't. Stop if you hurt.

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