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Becoming more active

Developing New Physical Activity Patterns

It's common knowledge today that exercise is good for you. Many studies have shown that sedentary living habits and low levels of physical fitness are associated with increased risk of disease and death from chronic illness like heart disease and cancer. A sedentary lifestyle is also a major cause of excess weight.

The physical activity component of the OPTIFAST® program is designed to help you increase energy expenditure by combining moderate physical activity with your daily routine. This modest increase in energy expenditure will help you manage your weight, as well as improve fitness. You may be more likely to stick with this approach to activity if you realize you don't have to perform vigorous exercise to manage your weight.

Research has also shown that individuals can realize health and fitness benefits from moderate physical activities such as walking, house or yard work, and recreational activities. Bouts of activity as short as 10 minutes can make a contribution to health and fitness if sufficient activity is accumulated throughout the day. In this program, you don't have to go to exercise classes or a health club to reap the benefits of physical activity. We will help you gradually change your lifestyle so that you will want to choose to become more physically active for the rest of your life.

tools for success

- Identify personal advantages and disadvantages of increasing your level of physical activity.
- Assess your readiness to become more active by completing the PARQ.
- Determine ways to reduce sedentary activity and increase physical activity.
- Take appropriate steps if you experience the warning signs of overexertion.
- Know how to treat minor injuries that may result from physical activity.

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Assessing Your Readiness

Before starting any exercise program, you should consult your physician to determine an appropriate level of activity for you. The Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PARQ) is a simple, self-administered checklist that can help you to perform an exercise test or to increase your activity level.

Most healthy adults can increase their participation in mild and moderate physical activities without an extensive medical examination. Mild and moderate exercise is defined as walking or other activities of a comparable intensity plus your usual daily activities.

The term "healthy," as used above, means that you have no personal history or evidence of **major** chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, hypertension, diabetes, or arthritis, that are potentially disabling. Even if you do have such a health problem, or such health problems run in your family, your physician can still help you devise an activity program to meet your needs.

Common sense is your best guide in answering the questions on the PARQ. Please read the questions carefully. Check YES or NO for each question as it applies to you.

Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire

Yes	No	
		Has your doctor ever said you have a heart condition and that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?
		Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?
		In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?
		Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?
		Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?
		Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs (for example, water pills) for your blood pressure or heart condition?
		Do you know of any other reason why you should not do physical activity?

If you answered 'YES' to one or more questions:

Consult with your physician before increasing your physical activity and/or taking a fitness test. Tell your physician which questions you answered 'YES' to.

Your physician can provide recommendations regarding your suitability for either:

- Unrestricted physical activity with the probability of gradually increasing activity.
- Restricted and supervised activity to meet your specific needs, at least initially. Your physician can recommend special programs or services in your community if available and appropriate.

If you answered 'NO' to **all** questions, you have reasonable assurance of your present suitability for activity:

- A gradual increase in appropriate physical activity promotes good fitness development while minimizing or eliminating discomfort.
- You may undertake a simple fitness test if you desire.

NOTE: You do not need to refrain from exercise if you have a minor illness such as a common cold. However, you should avoid strenuous activity if you have chest congestion or a fever. Allow yourself a few days of rest immediately following an illness, particularly if you had a fever. Let common sense be your guide.

Activity Pros and Cons

If your activity level has been sedentary for a long time, the thought of beginning a physical activity program may concern you.

If knowing you should be moving more is not enough to get you to swing into action, try to discover what type of benefits as well as obstacles you associate with exercise. Then brainstorm ways around these issues.

List the advantages of being physically active that are most likely to motivate you. Use these advantages as you develop your plans and goals to implement these lifestyle changes. List only the advantages you truly value at this time:

1.

2.

3.

Challenges to Your Daily Exercise Routine

Some of your concerns about increasing your daily exercise may be...

- Aching muscles at the start of the new exercise regimen
- Needing to change your schedule to accommodate planned activities
- Feeling that you need different or "appropriate" clothing
- Feeling embarrassed because of a low fitness level
- Feeling you lack support of friends and family

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Below, list all of the disadvantages and road blocks to daily exercise as you see them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are some of the mental strategies you can use to overcome these obstacles to daily activity?

As you progress through the OPTIFAST® Program, continue to review, revise and address your list of advantages and disadvantages of physical activity. The OPTIFAST health care team will work with you to develop exercise strategies that are doable and make sense for you.

Planning for Activity

There are some general guidelines that may be helpful as you begin to change your physical activity habits:

- **Habit change** is a gradual process, with occasional lapses and relapses.
- Learn from your **setbacks**, and build upon your **success**.
- Begin with **small changes**.

Most individuals find it difficult to change many behaviors all at once. An effective strategy for change is to make a small change, incorporate it into your lifestyle and then make another change.

Take a look at your current lifestyle as it relates to physical activity. List the number of minutes/hours that you spend each day (on the average) doing the following activities:

Activity	Minutes/hours per day
Sleeping	
Reading	
Watching TV	
Computer time	
Sitting	
Sedentary leisure activity	
Eating	
Walking	
Other	
Other	

I plan to reduce these sedentary activities (e.g., reduce my daily television viewing from four hours to two hours).

I plan to increase these physical activities (e.g., walk my dog twice a day).

Two-Minute Walks

A great way to get started on increasing your activity is to think about it in short intervals using the concept of the Two Minute Walk. You can fit in a two-minute walk almost anywhere, any time. Each walk will help you burn some calories and provide an immediate energy boost.

Extending Your Two-Minute Walks

At the beginning of the weight loss program, your goal should be to take at least five two-minute walks every day. The ultimate goal is to accumulate 45–60 minutes of brisk walking or similar activity each day.

At the end of each week, ask yourself, “How am I doing with respect to the two-minute walks goal?”

If you have had difficulty accomplishing this goal, analyze your plan and determine what obstacles stand between you and your goal. Using this information, develop a new plan for including five two-minute walks in your daily routine.

What are your obstacles to success?

1.

2.

3.

If you were successful, are you ready to increase your activity?

- You could increase the number of two-minute walks to seven or eight.
- You could extend the walking time for each walk.

Which approach is likely to work best for you? Write your new plan here:

NOTE: Your exercise goals and plans should be reviewed frequently. As you lose weight and your fitness level increases, you should establish new fitness goals. Your ultimate goal for long-term weight management should be to accumulate at least 250 minutes of moderate physical activity each week.

Helpful Resources

Other OPTIFAST LES™ Activity Modules

- *Getting Active I* (a comprehensive guide to building a walking program)
- *Getting Active II* (building a swimming or biking program)
- *Staying Active* (motivational tips, being active in hot or cold weather, etc.) can help you build an enjoyable and sustainable fitness program
- *Balanced Fitness* (a guide to include strength training and flexibility activities in your exercise routine)

Websites

- Build a basic exercise program. Read *Starting a Fitness Program and Components of a Basic Exercise Program* on the Aetna IntelliHealth website at: <http://www.intelihealth.com/IH/ihtIH/EMIHC254/9273/28979/>
- Find your personal walking style at the Aetna IntelliHealth website: <http://www.intelihealth.com/IH/ihtIH/WSIHW000/333/344/279784.html>
- *Shape Up America! Get Up and Go! 10,000 Steps A Day*. Download this guide for beginning a 10,000 steps program at the Shape Up America website. http://shapeup.org/shape/10000steps_2006fs.pdf
- Follow the Desk Exercise tips at: <http://www.intelihealth.com/IH/ihtIH/WSIHW000/20813/8254.html>

Many of the isometric moves suggested in this resource can be done while sitting at your desk or while stuck in traffic.

- *America on the Move*: Track daily steps by completing virtual trails, set activity goals, download toolkits at: <http://aom2.americaonthemove.org/Home.aspx>
- Access a wealth of information on walking including a 10-week walking program, training for a walking marathon, nutrition tools and counters, and access to a community of walkers at <http://walking.about.com/>

- Join a free 12-week physical activity program for women sponsored by the American Heart Association; focuses on one component per week to ensure your goals are met. <http://choosetomove.org/>

CDs and DVDs

- **Stay motivated with music.** Choose from walking tapes and CDs in a wide variety of music and different walking speeds, beginner to advanced. Order by phone at 1-800-878-4764 or www.workoutmusicvideo.com/walking.html
- **Walk at Home:** You don't need to spend hours in the gym. Get a leaner, stronger body in your living room with Leslie Sansone's Walk Away the Pounds in-home fitness system. Order at www.walkathome.com
- **Collage Video:** This site makes it easy to find the right video just for your needs. You can preview over 750 videos online, read descriptions by certified instructors, and talk to exercise specialists about their videos. Order by phone at 1-800-819-7111 or at www.collagevideo.com

Books

Active Living Everyday: 20 Weeks to Lifelong Vitality.

If you are ready to begin a more active lifestyle, consider purchasing this book developed by Steven Blair and colleagues at the Cooper Aerobics Institute. It is available online at the Human Kinetics Publishing Co. website at www.humankinetics.com

Exercise & Physical Activity: Your Everyday Guide from the National Institute on Aging!

This guide shows you many types of exercise and physical activity. It also has lots of tips to help you be active in ways that suit your lifestyle, interests, health and budget, whether you're just starting out, getting back to exercising after a break, or are fit enough to run a three-mile race. It's for everyone—people who are healthy and those who live with an ongoing health problem or disability. You can order a free copy by mail or download it at the NIA website: <http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/ExerciseGuide/>

Pedometers

A pedometer—an instrument that gauges the approximate distance traveled on foot by registering the number of steps—is a good self-monitoring device and a great motivational tool.

Once people start wearing a pedometer, they are more likely to become aware of just how little they are moving, and, since they get immediate feedback, they often choose to be more active. Significant improvements in blood glucose, blood pressure, blood cholesterol and weight control have been observed in people who take at least 10,000 steps each day. (The average inactive American takes only 3,000 to 5,000 steps each day.)

Technological advances have resulted in smaller, highly accurate pedometers. Most are smaller than an aspirin tin and can clip discreetly to a belt or waistband. Look for brands featuring easy-to-read digital displays that track steps, miles and calories, and can be adjusted to match your stride length. Some pedometers even keep a beat to help you maintain a heart-healthy pace.

Consumer Reports cites two reliable and accurate pedometer brands:

- Accusplit (<http://www.accusplit.com/PedometerHome.aspx>)
- Omron (<http://www.omronhealthcare.com/products/187-home-products-fitness-diagnostics>)

Warning Signs of Overexertion

Being active is *very safe*. In fact, the benefits of increased activity outweigh the risks that might exist. However, just as your body must adapt to new eating patterns, it must also adapt to the demands of increased exercise.

STOP ACTIVITY IMMEDIATELY if any of these symptoms occur, and see your physician before resuming activity:

- **Abnormal heart activity**, including irregular beats, flutters or palpitations in the chest or throat; sudden burst of rapid heartbeats; or a sudden slowing of rapid pulse
- **Pain or pressure** in the chest, the arm or the throat during or immediately following activity
- **Extreme dizziness or lightheadedness**, sudden lack of coordination, confusion, cold sweating or fainting
- **Abnormal shortness of breath** with mild or moderate exertion
- **Sudden pain or numbness** in any part of the body, especially the left arm
- **Pain or “heartburn”** in the region of the upper abdomen
- **Temporary loss of speech or vision**

ADJUST YOUR ACTIVITY and take precautions if you notice any of these symptoms:

- **Persistent rapid pulse rate** (more than 100 beats per minute) after 5 to 10 minutes rest or longer. Reduce the intensity of the activity and progress to a longer period of activity at a lower intensity. Consult your physician if the condition persists.
- **Nausea or vomiting** after physical activity. Reduce the intensity of the activity and prolong the cool-down period. Avoid eating a large meal for at least two hours before any programmed exercise.
- **Extreme breathlessness** lasting more than 10 minutes after you stop exercising. Consult your physician if the condition persists.
- **Prolonged fatigue** up to 24 hours after exercise. Reduce the intensity and duration of the activity.

Some of these signs and symptoms may merely be normal responses to an increase in physical activity. When in doubt, always contact a physician.