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## Staying active

### Advantages of Staying Active

Remember when you were seven years old? Chances are good you spent much of your time chasing friends, pedaling bikes, throwing balls, jumping into cool swimming pools, and so on. It seemed the more you did, the more you wanted to do. Your energy level rarely ran low, and it was fun.

Did you know the same is true for adults? Active adults can and do play and work harder than their sedentary counterparts. In fact, some studies suggest that being active can make you feel 10 years younger than you really are. Researchers at the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging have proven there is good reason active people claim to feel younger. When evaluated through a variety of health and fitness tests, bodies of active adults appear to be younger physically than the bodies of their couch potato peers. What makes the body decline is not so much the passing of years as it is the combined and cumulative effects of inactivity, poor nutrition, and other harmful health habits. New research on aging also reveals that higher levels of physical activity are correlated with better brain aging. And exercise has emerged as a factor that may prevent or delay the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

The best news is that much of what causes aging can be changed. Even people well past middle age, who have been inactive for many years, can regain lost muscle, lose fat, and restore strength.

#### Exercise - The Closest Thing to a Magic Bullet

Scientists and researchers may disagree about how to improve our longevity but when it comes to one subject, there appears to be universal agreement: exercise is

### tools for success

- Understand how exercise helps reduce your risk for disease and assists with long term weight management.
- Identify your personal obstacles to becoming and staying more physically active.
- Prepare for physical activity in various environmental conditions.

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one of the most powerful behaviors available to reduce our risk for disease and improve our quality of life. "The single thing that comes close to a magic bullet, in terms of its strong and universal benefits, is exercise," says Frank Hu, epidemiologist at the Harvard School of Public Health. It can lower the risk of heart attack, stroke, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, depression, dementia, insomnia, osteoporosis, gallstones, diverticulitis, falls, erectile dysfunction, peripheral vascular disease and certain kinds of cancer. So how much exercise is recommended?

### Physical Activity Recommendations

Activity, even in small bouts, all adds up. Based on the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, it is suggested that American adults get 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity weekly. Moderate activities include biking slowly, canoeing, recreational dancing, gardening, tennis (doubles), using a manual wheelchair, using hand cyclers (arm ergometers), walking briskly, and water aerobics. Vigorous activities include aerobic dancing, basketball, fast dancing, jumping rope, martial arts, jogging or running, riding a bike on hills or riding fast, soccer, swimming fast, swimming laps, and tennis (singles). These activities should be done for at least 10 minutes at a time.

The report also recommends strengthening activities at least two days a week. These include heavy gardening, lifting weights, push-ups on the floor or against a wall, sit-ups, and working with resistance bands. (You can print the entire report and recommendations at <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/adultguide.pdf>)

In 2009 the American College of Sports Medicine published their guidelines on physical activity and weight loss:

<b>Prevent weight gain</b>	150-250 minutes/week of moderate intensity activity to prevent weight gain. More than 150 minutes/week of moderate intensity activity is associated with modest weight loss.
<b>Weight loss</b>	150-250 minutes/week of moderate intensity activity provides only modest weight loss. Greater amounts (>250 minutes) provide clinically significant weight loss.
<b>Weight maintenance after weight loss</b>	Some evidence suggests that >250 minutes/week of moderate intensity activity will prevent weight regain.

Information from the National Weight Control Registry (NWCR) supports the need for high levels of physical activity following weight loss. The NWCR tracks people who are successfully maintaining a significant weight loss and they report exercising an average of an hour a day.

Even if right now you can't imagine meeting these recommendations for exercise, the take-home message is this: More exercise is better than some, and some is better than none. As you lose weight, you will notice you have more energy and it will become easier to be more active.

### Exercise fights fat build-up in three different ways:

1. It burns calories that would otherwise have been stored as fat.
2. It increases the rate at which you burn calories, not only during the time that you are active, but also for several hours after you're done.

3. It can increase the amount of calories you burn all day. If you exercise routinely, your body will respond by building bigger, stronger muscles so you can perform the activity faster and with more ease. Since muscle is the body's calorie-burning tissue, the more muscle you have, the more calories your body will burn all day, everyday, regardless of what else you are doing. As an added benefit, muscle's favorite fuel is fat.

### **I know, I know, I know..... but,**

All right, you say. You know all of this. But it still hasn't moved you up and out of the chair. Chances are good, just reading this material won't either. The only way to change your attitude about exercise and activity is to try it. The more you sit, the more your body learns to crave sitting. The more active you become, the more your body craves activity. That's right—craves!

Anyone who exercises regularly knows how they feel if they miss a day of activity. They will probably say they felt boxed in. They could not wait to get out. Some people say that if they miss their activity for too many days in a row, they actually start to feel more tired. It is hard to believe until you experience it yourself. Once you become more routinely active, you too may find that your body craves activity as much as it used to crave sitting or sleeping.

## **What Hurdles Are Holding You Back?**

### **I don't have time to exercise.**

Time is the number one reason given for not being more active. Many people are under the false impression that if they can't exercise for 30 minutes at a time, they shouldn't start. Fitness experts at the Cooper Aerobic Institute in Dallas, Texas found that short periods of activity done throughout the day add up to significant health benefits. In fact, the benefits started when people simply added two-minute walks several times during the day. Few people complained that they didn't have time for a two-minute walk.

Starting out with short periods of activity made it easier for their bodies to adjust to being active. It was also easier on them psychologically, as they learned to gradually fit more activity into their schedules. You may have added some two-minute walks to your routine during the initial phase of your weight-loss program. In the long term weight phase, you should strive to lengthen the periods of time you are already walking or add additional walking periods throughout your day.

Begin with a two-minute walk and expand it to 10 minutes. For most individuals, establishing an active routine is the toughest part. Once they have made time in their schedule for a new activity, they can learn to expand that activity relatively easily. To make sure you actually get around to taking those two-minute walks, write them on your calendar and protect that time just like you would any other important business or social appointment.

Some people contend the only way they can make time to exercise is to eliminate family time or socializing. Exercise doesn't need to be a solitary affair. Shared activities build relationships. A shared physical activity is a great way to bring family and friends together. It provides time for communication. Parents who make physical activity a priority help their children establish a healthy lifestyle now and set a

## **two-minute walk**

### **A few ideas for two-minute walks:**

- Walk to another department to talk with a co-worker instead of sending an e-mail.
- Make a point to go to a different floor in your home when you need to make a phone call.
- Park at the end of parking lots instead of the front, at work, school, the mall, anywhere.
- Walk down stairs instead of riding the elevator. Walking down steps can improve balance. As your fitness improves, you can try getting off the elevator a few floors early and walking up the stairs.

good example for their future. Even if your schedule requires you to exercise alone most days, you are apt to find your improved mood and energy level contribute to more positive relationships.

### **I don't have a convenient place to exercise.**

Make exercise convenient by focusing on building more physical activity into your daily life. The Two-Minute Walks idea is just one way to burn more calories while performing routine tasks. If you are ready to get involved in a more formal exercise program, consider a membership in a health/fitness club close to your home or work, or purchase home exercise equipment. An aerobic dance DVD can be an economical and fun first foray into home exercise.

### **I hate to sweat!**

For some, perspiration is a real killjoy. For others, it's a sign of victory. People who can envision sweat as a signal their body is burning fat can sometimes get beyond the anti-sweating attitude.

Any time you perspire, it is a sign your body is cooling off. While you are exercising, you burn more calories than usual and create more heat as a result. Your body sweats as a way to cool you from the extra heat (calories) exercise releases. Caution: This reasoning is not a good argument for wearing extra clothes just so you can "sweat out the calories." On the contrary, that kind of sweating will only make you dehydrated, nauseated, and put you at risk for fainting during your work out. Always wear loose fitting, comfortable clothes that allow your body to breathe and regulate its temperature normally. See the information at the end of the module about choosing the right kind of clothing for different warm and cold weather workouts.

### **Exercise is boring.**

Experts agree the best exercise is the one you will do. Most people who stick with a fitness

program do so because they enjoy it and have found ways to make it fit into their life routine. They also tend to vary their activities to keep them interesting. You may also want to pick some goals to work towards, like training for a 5k walk/run or biking in a 10K race.

### **I'm too tired to exercise.**

Actually, just the opposite is true! You are too tired not to exercise! Exercise counters the effect of fatigue. People who exercise regularly report that they have more energy and they sleep better too. When you are feeling tired, get up and get energized with activity!

### **I don't know how to get started—again.**

As you have already learned, getting active can be easier than staying active. Starting over can be difficult once you've slipped out of the exercise routine, in part because you know starting is no guarantee of sticking with it. Ease your way back into activity by inserting a series of two-minute walks into your day. As with any lapse, the sooner you get back on track, the easier it will be to reestablish your activity pattern. Learn from your lapse. To help you stay on track in the future, look to your past. Identify your high-risk situations for inactivity and give yourself cues to be active. Discuss your challenges with your OPTIFAST group leader or exercise specialist. They can help guide you around your exercise barriers.

### **I can't see any results from my exercise.**

If you have been focusing on exercise as a way to lose weight, you may feel it is no longer benefiting you once you reach your goal weight. Change your focus. Your weight maintenance success is due, in part, to your increased activity level. Remember the concept of energy balance? What you eat is only one part of the weight loss

## change your surroundings

**Make a point of walking in different areas. The variety of people and change in scenery can help keep walks interesting.**

- Choose one walking path close to home and one close to work.
- Use walking trail loops around a lake or through a tree-covered area.
- Pick open air areas that circle athletic fields full of children playing or practicing.

equation. Physical activity can help ensure the results you want. There are other, less obvious, changes occurring as well, such as reduced cholesterol, lower blood pressure, lower blood sugar, reduced stress, improved endurance, and fitness. Keeping an exercise/activity log can help you see the subtle improvement in your health, mood, and endurance that are related to your exercise routine. Take the focus off maintaining what you've achieved (boring) and work towards a new goal, i.e., better health.

### **I have an injury/illness that limits my exercise.**

As wheelchair athletes have proven, nearly everyone can do some type of physical activity. The trick is finding activities that work for you. The risk associated with exercise for individuals with special health concerns or injuries varies widely. If you have a medical condition that limits your mobility, discuss the types of physical activity that are safe and effective with your health care professional. For those with limited mobility, you can find seated chair exercise DVDs at [www.SitandBeFit.com](http://www.SitandBeFit.com).

At 100 pounds overweight, even the slightest exertion left Sara's heart pounding. "I was so afraid of having a heart attack, I was too afraid to move," she recalls. On the advice of the OPTIFAST Program physician, Sara joined the cardiac rehab group at the local hospital. The easy-does-it approach and the security of knowing help was on site allowed her to ease into a more active lifestyle. Today, she exercises at the rehab center four days a week. Her routine includes a combination of aerobic and strength training activities.

### **I don't like sports.**

Some people simply dislike the repetitive aspect of sporting activities. Instead, they would rather take a hike into the woods or walk their dog with a friend or spouse. Unfortunately, they often think these activities don't count as exercise because they aren't "workouts."

All activities that get us moving instead of sitting are important. That includes walking the dog, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, cleaning the house, walking behind the lawn mower, gardening, washing your car, walking or riding a bicycle to and from errands, pacing while talking on the telephone instead of sitting in a chair, and parking at the back

of the parking lot instead of the first few rows.

Below is a table of calories burned doing some typical household and exercise activities. These amounts indicate the calories per hour burned per pound of body weight. Simply multiply the calories per hour by your body weight in pounds to determine the number of calories expended per hour for each activity. For example, if you weigh 180 lbs. and you want to determine the number of calories you will burn by walking for one hour, multiply 180 x 2.16 which equals 388.8 calories burned.

Besides the common cardiovascular "sports" such as walking, running, biking, or swimming, you may prefer activities such as playing volleyball, softball, basketball, chasing Frisbees, or playing Frisbee golf. If you enjoy being involved in team sports and are more likely to follow through with them, then consider starting here. Get involved in non-competitive adult leagues with your park system. You'll be surprised how much fun you will have and how much energy you will expend running and playing.

Another fun activity to try is **geocaching**. This is a high-tech treasure hunting game played by adventure seekers equipped with GPS devices. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, outdoors and then share your experiences online. Geocaching is enjoyed by people from all age groups, with a strong sense of community and support for the environment. You can find out more about this new "sport" at [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com).

**Calorie Burning Activity Table**

Activity		Cal/hr/ lb body wt
Basketball		3.78
Baseball		1.86
Canoeing	Leisure	1.20
Cleaning	Housework	1.62
	Scrubbing floors	3.00
Cooking		1.29
Cycling	5.5 mph	1.74
	9.4 mph	2.70
	Racing	4.62
Dancing		2.28
Eating	Sitting	0.60

Fishing		1.68
Gardening	Weeding	2.35
	Mowing (manual)	1.84
	Mowing (power)	1.63
	Raking	1.45
Golf		2.34
Hiking		2.52
Running	Jogging	4.15
	8-min. mile	5.64
	6-min. mile	6.84
Swim freestyle	Slow	3.48
	Fast	4.26
Tennis		3.00
Walking	Normal	2.16
Weight training		1.90

Ginger's activity breakthrough came when the vet told her that her dog would behave better if he got some exercise, and that his health would improve as well. She used to walk her dog only on weekends. "After talking with the vet, I started walking my dog once around the block twice a day and built up to a one-mile loop weekdays and a two-mile loop on the weekends. One day, my five-year-old son accompanied me. After noting how happy the dog was to be out for a walk, he said, 'Walking is good for everybody in the family, even the dog—see how happy he is?' His simple observation contained a world of wisdom."

## Dress For Comfort

Heat is a natural by-product of exercise. Your body, in an attempt to cool itself off, will sweat. When the sweat evaporates from your skin, you feel cooler. When you pick clothing to wear while exercising, choose clothes that will allow for the evaporation of sweat or clothing made of materials specifically designed to wick the sweat away from your skin and keep you cooler.

### Basic Gear

You don't need to spend a fortune on a wardrobe for exercise. Choose some basic pieces: T-shirts, tank tops, shorts, sweat pants, lightweight jackets or vests. Any of these pieces can be used when you are exercising, taking a Sunday stroll in the park with the family, or

doing chores on Saturday.

- Most exercisers prefer loose fitting clothing. This allows their body to breathe, move, and cool naturally.
- Wear comfortable well-fitted shoes and moisture-wicking socks to prevent blisters.
- Wear sunscreen and a light, ventilated hat, visor, or sunglasses to protect you from the sun.
- Since most exercise shorts and sweatpants don't come with pockets, consider carrying a lightweight fanny pack to carry items like i.d., a cell phone, cash, keys, and tissues.
- Use a very small wallet that you can tie onto the tongue of your shoe. It's the right size for a car key, i.d., and a few coins.
- Skip the hand and ankle weights. Unless you know how to properly use these, you can end up causing more harm than good. People with hypertension can increase their blood pressure all the more by gripping too hard while carrying hand weights. Walking with ankle weights can also cause lower back injuries in some people. You are better off walking an extra 10 minutes than trying to increase the intensity of your walk by using these devices.
- When exercising before dawn or at dusk, wear light-colored clothing and reflective bands or strips of tape for illumination. You can also purchase lightweight vests made of neon colors.
- Consider applying petroleum jelly to the areas of your body that may be rubbed by clothing or otherwise irritated.
- Carry a small towel or damp wash cloth if you sweat heavily. Or consider wearing a headband or wristbands. As soon as you are done, change into a dry shirt.

### Clothing for Warm Weather

- Loose-fitting, comfortable casual wear.
- Wear one layer of clothing.
- Select clothing made from breathable fabrics specially designed to wick moisture from your body as you exercise.
- Choose light-colored clothing; you'll be cooler.

## Clothing for Cold Weather

- Wear one light layer of clothing for every 10 to 15 degrees below 70 degrees. Consider purchasing a loose-fitting vest. The simple addition of a vest can keep your torso warm while it gives your arms the freedom to move.
  - Wear gloves or mittens to prevent frostbite. Thermal gloves and sock liners are the perfect weight for crisp fall and spring mornings that don't require heavy gloves.
  - Choose fabrics such as polypropylene that absorb moisture. Also look for an outer layer fabric that is waterproof and windproof.
  - In cold weather, wear a hat, ear bands, or scarf. Wearing a hat can help retain up to 60 percent of body heat.

## Drink Plenty of Water

Your body needs at least two and a half quarts of water per day just to do your normal activities. When you increase your activity level, you also need to increase your water intake. For most people, this is easy because they are thirsty during and after their exercise sessions. If you can, carry a water bottle with you and sip on water as you exercise. If not, keep a full water bottle in the car to drink once you are done. Skip the sports drinks. These beverages are designed for athletes who engage in 60 minutes or more of strenuous exercise. For most recreational athletes, the extra calories are just that—extra.

Remember, thirst is not a reliable indicator of hydration. The best rule of thumb is to drink before you are thirsty. Thirst is a natural response by your body to say that you are low on water. If you are low on fluids, your system will actually hold onto what little it has. If you are curious about how much water your body uses during a workout, weigh yourself before and after your workout. For every pound you lose, you need to drink three cups of fluid within two hours.

## Environment-Proof Your Routine

### Physical Activity in Cold Weather

Staying warm is the key to successful cold weather workouts. To stay in the comfort zone, dress warmly, maintain a constant pace, and avoid the following situations that can predispose an individual to hypothermia: rain associated with cold temperatures, a high wind chill factor, and wet clothing. If your clothes become wet during an activity, change them as soon as possible to minimize the danger of hypothermia.

### Physical Activity in Hot Weather

High temperatures and humidity decrease the body's ability to cool itself, especially for larger people. As heat and humidity increase, the sweat rate and heart rate of an individual also increases. Increased heat and humidity reduce sweat evaporation and cause large losses of body water.

Overheating (hyperthermia) can lead to life-threatening situations (heat exhaustion and heat stroke) if ignored. Early warning signs include fatigue, dizziness, and possibly nausea and muscle cramps. If you notice these symptoms, slow down, cool down, and rest in the shade. The classic sign of heat stroke is the absence of sweating. This is an immediate, life-threatening emergency. If you don't promptly take steps to cool down, you can lose consciousness. Following these guidelines will reduce the dangers of activity in the heat and in high humidity:

- Reduce the intensity of your activity.
- Don't engage in a physical activity for more than 30 minutes at a moderate to high exertion level.
- Plan activities during the coolest parts of the day, particularly in the early morning or in the evening.
- Drink adequate amounts of water before, during, and after physical activity.
- Never use dehydration as a method of weight loss.

## Physical Activity in High Pollution or Pollen Season

Staying active during allergy season is therapeutic for allergy sufferers, as it maintains lung capacity. You just need to adapt your activity to minimize contact with allergy-promoting pollens and molds, as well as lung irritating pollutants. Check with your weather service for up-to-date pollen counts and pollution index data. This information is also available on many news service web sites, such as CNN.

- Exercise indoors on days when the pollution index or pollen count is high. Rowing, stair climbing, stationary cycling, and exercise DVDs are good alternatives to an outdoor workout, and they can be performed at home or in a local gym. Also consider walking in a shopping mall, swimming, or joining an aerobic dance class during pollen season.
- If you are exercising out of doors, plan physical activity for the early morning or later in the evening to avoid high pollution levels. If it is pollen you are trying to avoid, try exercising later in the day since most plants pollinate early in the morning.
- Select the places you exercise carefully and avoid areas with heavy pollen, mold, and spores. Avoid exercising next to heavily used roadways: vehicular pollutants can irritate and damage lung tissue.
- If your allergy symptoms are persistent, ask your doctor about the latest developments in

allergy drugs. New, longer-acting, non-drowsy medications, as well as a variety of inhaled medications are available. There are nasal inhalers for hay fever and sinus allergies as well as oral inhalers for asthma. (If you use an asthma rescue inhaler, be sure to carry it with you during exercise.)

## Safety-Proof Your Environment

Exercising outside is energizing and good for the soul...but it is important to follow some simple safety precautions.

- Let someone know the location of your activity and when you are expected to return.
- Walk or be active with a partner if at all possible.
- Stay on populated roads or trails and avoid secluded spots.
- Focus on your environment. Avoid using headphones which can distract you from your awareness of people, animals, and traffic around you.
- Carry items such as your identification, cell phone, whistle, and flashlight (for evening activities).
- Dress appropriately for the weather and carry a water bottle to prevent dehydration.
- In the evening, wear light colored clothing and/or reflective items so you can be easily seen.

## key goals

Using the tips in this module, develop 2 – 3 goals to work towards.

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