

Exercise for Fitness

Your body is like a machine. Exercise helps all the parts of your body work their best. You need to exercise regularly to stay healthy and fit.

Benefits of Exercise

Exercise helps both the mind and body in many ways:

- Helps your muscles be strong and flexible.
- Helps your heart and lungs pump blood and oxygen better.
- Helps lower your blood pressure.
- Helps relieve stress.
- Helps you gain energy and confidence.
- Helps your body develop more lean muscle and burn off fat.
- Helps lower cholesterol levels and blood fats.



Types of Exercise

There are two kinds of exercise: aerobic (ah-ROW-bik) and anaerobic (an-ah-ROW-bik).

Aerobic exercise, such as jogging, swimming, riding a bike or fast walking, uses oxygen and helps get your heart and lungs into good shape. It also increases your endurance (allows you to exercise a long time without getting tired). Aerobic exercise will help reduce body fat **if you do it at least 3 times a week for about 20 to 40 minutes each time.**

Anaerobic exercise, such as weight lifting, tennis, bowling and gymnastics increases strength and makes muscles larger. It doesn't help your heart and lungs very much or help with endurance.



Picture 1 Exercise helps keep you healthy and fit.

Before You Start an Exercise Program

Most healthy young people don't need to have a physical exam before starting an exercise program. But, if you have a history of diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, heart disease or a recent injury, you should check with your doctor before you begin an exercise program.

If you haven't been a very active person until now, it's best to start slowly. Then slowly increase your routine to exercise harder, more often and for longer periods.

Each Time You Exercise

1. Take 5 to 10 minutes to stretch and "warm up" to prepare your body for activity.
2. Do 20 to 40 minutes of an aerobic type of exercise. During this time, check your pulse. If you get dizzy or short of breath, stop the fast exercise, but walk around more slowly until your heart rate slows. (Your heart rate will increase during exercise. It should return to your normal resting heart rate within a few minutes after exercise. As you get into shape, it will take less time for your heart rate to return to normal.)
3. Take 5 to 10 minutes to "cool down." Continue with slower and gentler movements, such as slow walking and stretching. This helps prevent sore muscles and joints and gradually slows the heart to its resting rate.



To Find your Resting Heart Rate

Your **resting heart rate** is the number of times per minute that your heart beats when you have not been exercising. As you get into shape, your resting heart rate will become lower. You can learn to take your pulse to find your resting heart rate. To take your pulse:

- Ask your doctor or nurse to show you how to find your pulse on the side of your neck or on the inside of your wrist (Picture 2).
- Start counting your pulse with the first beat at 0 seconds. Continue counting heartbeats for 10 seconds, then stop.
- Multiply this number by 6. This will be the number of heart beats per minute.
- Another way to count your heart rate is to count the heartbeats for a full minute (60 seconds).



Picture 2 Learn how to take your pulse on your neck or wrist.

Points to Remember

- Vary your exercise schedule to prevent becoming bored and to prevent muscle or joint pain and injury. Do different exercises on different days.
- Make walking, swimming or cycling a part of your aerobic workout.
- During warm weather, wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing. (You may need to exercise less hard or for shorter periods during hot weather.)
- While exercising, you should be able to talk comfortably. If you have trouble breathing or feel faint or weak during or after exercise, you are probably pushing yourself too hard.
- Drink lots of water before, during and after exercise (about 3 to 6 ounces every 15 minutes).
- Wear shoes that provide good foot support for walking and running exercises.
- Exercise videotapes can be borrowed from the public library.
- Remember, regular exercise is an important part of weight control. Weight you lose by dieting alone will most likely be gained back. Check with your doctor or nurse about what your ideal weight is for your age, sex and height.
- Sometimes it is more fun to exercise with a friend.

Set realistic goals for yourself. Fitness takes time and effort but it is worth it!