



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.™*

**Helping Hand™**

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

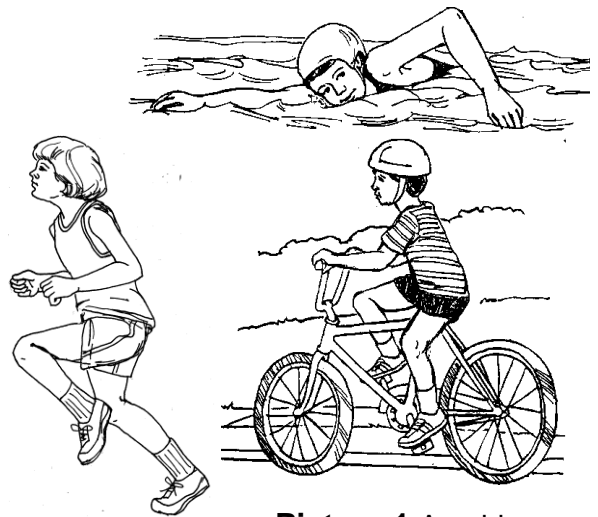
## Exercise for Fitness

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 become strong and flexible
- helps your heart and lungs pump blood and oxygen better
- lowers your blood pressure
- relieves stress
- helps you gain energy and confidence
- helps your body develop more lean muscle and burn off fat
- lowers cholesterol levels and blood fats



**Picture 1** Aerobic exercise helps keep you healthy and fit.

### Types of exercise

There are 2 kinds of exercise: aerobic (ah ROW bik) and anaerobic (AN ah ROW bik).

- **Aerobic exercise**, like jogging, swimming, riding a bike or fast walking, uses oxygen (Picture 1). It helps get your heart and lungs in good shape. It also helps you exercise longer without getting tired. This is called endurance. 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**, like lifting weights, and high intensity interval training (HIIT), increases strength and makes muscles larger. It does not help your heart and lungs very much or help with endurance.

## Before you start an exercise program

Most healthy young people do not need to have a physical exam before starting an exercise program. However, if you have a history of diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, heart disease or a recent injury, check with your health care provider before you start an exercise program.

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

## Each time you exercise

- Take 5 to 10 minutes to stretch and "warm up." This means to get your body moving and heart beating faster to prepare your body for activity.
- Do 20 to 40 minutes of an aerobic type of exercise. During this time, check your heart rate or pulse (Picture 2). 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.

- Take 5 to 10 minutes to "cool down." This means to continue with slower and gentler movements, like slow walking and stretching. This helps prevent sore muscles and joints. It also slows the heart to its resting rate.



## To find your pulse

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

- Ask your health care provider 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

- Change 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 intensely 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 give good foot support for walking and running exercises.
- Exercise DVDs can be borrowed from the public library or programs can be found online.
- 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 health care provider 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!