

INCREASING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

July, 2021

Most people have been told, “you need to increase your physical activity” or “If you did some sort of physical activity, you would probably feel better.” *Physical activity of any kind is healthy and can help increase positive mood and energy.* It can also decrease weight, stress and blood pressure, increase alertness and motivation to accomplish other goals. This isn’t earth shattering news, as a matter of fact it is hard to find anyone who hasn’t heard these things before. Yet, it still isn’t enough to get people up and moving. So, if most people already know that physical activity has so many positive attributes, why is it that so many people don’t engage in these activities?

When people feel down or depressed, stressed or nervous they tend to cut out healthy activities that normally bring value, meaning and enjoyment to their lives. Giving up healthy habits in the face of negative mood and life stress seems to be the path of least resistance for most, and the initiation of a cycle that is difficult to stop.

One commonly-cited goal is to engage in physical activity at least 30 minutes a day, three to five days per week. If you are currently leading a relatively sedentary lifestyle with little regular physical activity, it will be important to start slowly and gradually work up to your physical activity goals. This will help you avoid “overdoing it” and suffering through muscle aches and pains and discouragement. If you haven’t been engaged in physical activity for a while, it isn’t difficult to find reasons not to start. Where most people get “stuck” is in finding ways to overcome the barriers to getting started. Sometimes, being able to weigh the reasons NOT to engage in physical activity against the reasons TO engage in physical activity can help create the motivation and rationale to begin MOVING forward. Try using the scale below to “weigh” your options..

Reasons Not To Engage In Physical Activity

- Feeling Sad
- Feeling Sick
- Low Energy
- No Social Support
- Physical activity Goal is Unattainable
- Don’t Have Proper Attire
- Too Busy
- Too Tired
- Too Hot or Cold
- Pain
- Low Level of Interest
- Intimidated by Gym People

Reasons To Engage In Physical Activity

- Improve mood
- Increase Energy
- Weight Control
- Improve Sleep
- Stress Reduction
- Lower Blood Pressure
- Lower Cholesterol
- Increase Muscle Tone
- Decrease Chronic Pain
- Improve Concentration
- Increase Metabolism
- Improve Cardiovascular functioning
- Enhance Stamina for Daily

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INCREASING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (CONT.)

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List Top 3 Reasons to Engage in Physical activity

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- My short term physical activity goal is: _____
- My long term physical activity goal is: _____
- When I REALLY don't feel like engaging in activity, I will: _____
- I will look to: _____ for support in my effort to increase my physical activity.
- I will reward myself with: _____

**Post this list in a place where you will see it several times each day!*

Getting Started

- **Check with your doctor** - It is always a good idea to check in with your doctor before increasing your physical activity. This is particularly true if you're over 40, if you smoke, or if you have a family history of cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, diabetes, arthritis, or asthma.
- **Have fun** - Choose an activity you like or want to do. You're much more likely to stick with it. If you find your first choice doesn't suit you, switch to something else.
- **Start slowly and progress gradually** - You'll avoid becoming discouraged and reduce the risk of injury.
- **Set goals** - Maybe you want to lose a little weight, get in shape for a particular sport you enjoy, or reduce arthritis pain and increase joint mobility.
- **Keep track** - You may not notice that you're walking further in the same amount of time or that you're not as winded climbing the stairs. Keeping track helps you evaluate your progress and gives you a sense of accomplishment.
- **Reward yourself** - When you reach a goal, buy yourself a new T-shirt or tennis racket.
- **Find a partner** - It's more fun to share and you'll keep each other on track.

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- **Have a plan B** - If it's raining, walk around an indoor mall or other indoor activity.
- **Include variety** - You're less likely to become bored if you engage in a variety of different activities (for example, basketball one day, yoga another, and taking a walk on another). The thing to remember is that ANY activity is beneficial!
- **Stick with it** – Regular engagement in physical activity is more likely to lead to long-term benefits.

Daily Physical activity Goal	Date	Type of Activity	Level of Difficulty Low-Mod-Diff	Total Physical activity Time	Reward for Completion of Goal