

Active at Any Size

Part 2—Physical Activity

Gentle physical activity is healthy. You do not have to push yourself to benefit from physical activity. Thirty minutes of gentle physical activity (like walking) can be just as healthy as 15 minutes of intense physical activity (like fast dancing).

Walking (weight-bearing)

The walking that you do during the day (like doing chores around the house or in the yard) can help you be more fit. But regular, steady walking that makes you breathe heavier can help you to be healthier. It will give your heart and lungs—as well as your leg muscles—a good workout.

If you are not active now, start slowly. Try to walk 5 minutes a day for the first week. Walk 8 minutes the next week. Stay at 8-minute walks until you feel comfortable. Then increase your walks to 11 minutes. Slowly lengthen each walk by 3 minutes—or walk faster.

Tips for Walking

Wear comfortable walking shoes with a lot of support. If you walk often, you may need to buy new shoes every 6 to 8 months.

- Wear garments that prevent inner thigh chafing, such as tights or spandex shorts.
- Make walking fun. Walk with a friend or pet. Walk in places you enjoy, like a park or shopping mall.

Where to Work Out

You can do many activities in your home. But there are other fun ways to be active in health clubs, in recreation centers, or outdoors. It may be hard to be physically active around other people. Keep in mind that you have just as much right to be healthy and active as anyone else.

Dancing (weight-bearing or non-weight-bearing)

Dancing may help

- Tone your muscles
- Improve your flexibility
- Make your heart stronger
- Make your lungs work better

You can dance in a health club, in a nightclub, or at home. To dance at home, just move your body to some lively music!

Dancing on your feet is a weight-bearing activity. Dancing while seated lets you move your arms and legs to music while taking the weight off your feet. This may be a good choice if you can't stand on your feet very long.

Water Workouts (non-weight-bearing)

Exercising in water helps you feel

- Flexible—You can bend and move your body in water in ways you cannot on land.
- Strong—Working against the water will help you body get stronger.
- At less risk of injury—Water makes your body float. This keeps your joints from being pounded or jarred and helps prevent sore muscles and injury.
- Refreshed—You can keep cooler in water, even when you are working hard.

You do not need to know how to swim to work out in water. You can do shallow-water or deep-water exercises without swimming.

For shallow-water exercise, the water level should be between your waist and your chest. If the water is too shallow, it will be hard to move your arms underwater. If the water is deeper than chest height, it will be hard to keep your feet touching the pool bottom.

For deep-water exercise, most of your body is underwater. This means that your whole body will get a good workout. For safety and comfort, wear a foam belt or life jacket.

Many swim centers offer classes in water workouts. Check with the pools in your area to find the best water workout for you.

Weight Training (weigh-bearing or non-weight-bearing)

Weight training rule of thumb.

If you cannot lift a weight 6 times in a row, the weight you are lifting is too heavy. If you can easily lift a weight 15 times in a row, your weight is too light.

Weight training builds strong muscles and bones. Getting stronger can also help prepare you for other kinds of physical activity. You can weight train at home or at a fitness center.

You do not need benches or bars to begin weight training at home. You can use a pair of hand weights or even two soup cans.

Make sure you know the correct posture and that your movements are slow and controlled.

Before you buy a home gym, check its weight rating (the number of pounds it can support) to make sure it is safe for your size. If you want to join a fitness center where you can use weights, shop around for one where you feel at ease.

Weight-Control Information Network (WIN). (Revised 2006, October). Active at Any Size. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). NIH Publication No. 04-4352. Retrieved June 29, 2009, at <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/>