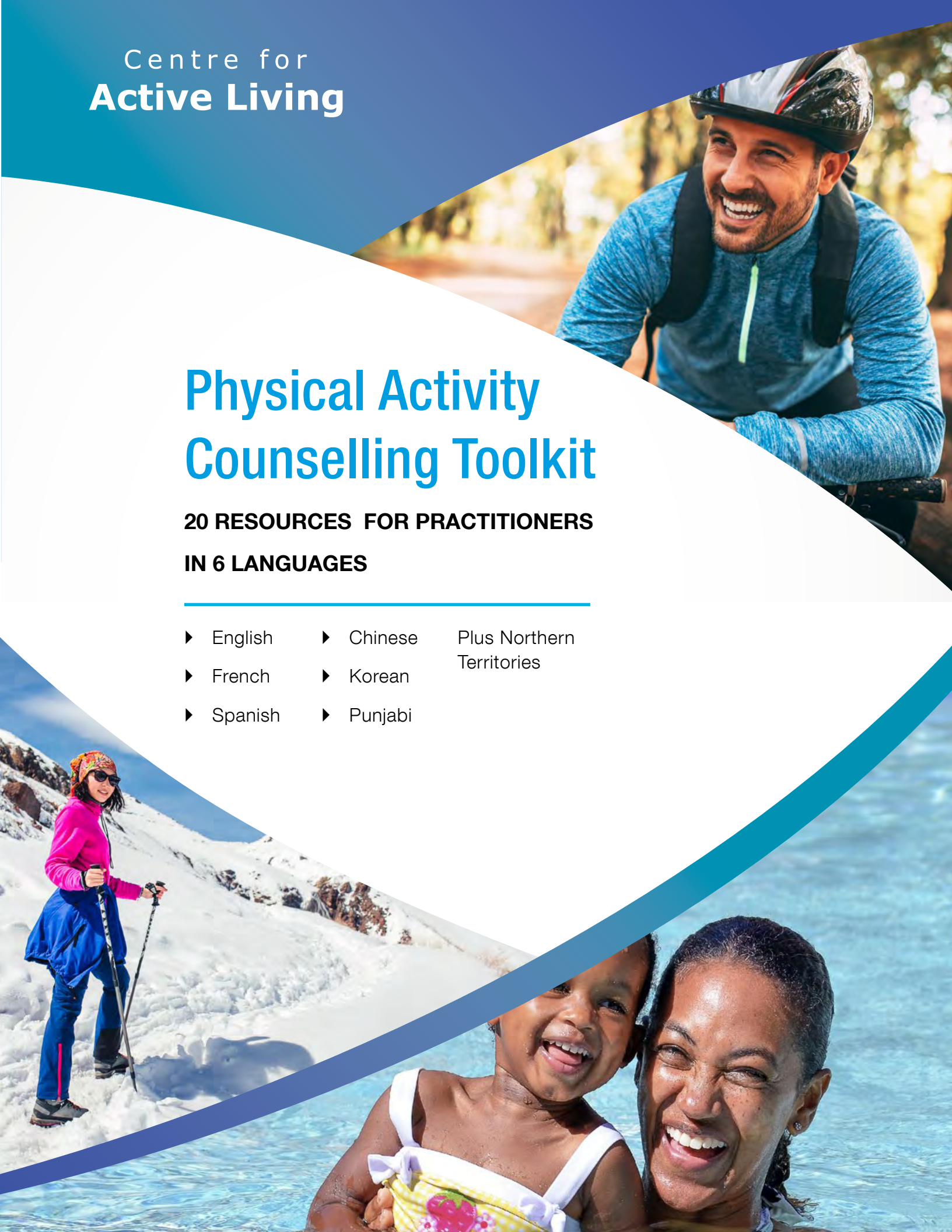


Physical Activity Counselling Toolkit

**20 RESOURCES FOR PRACTITIONERS
IN 6 LANGUAGES**

-
- ▶ English
 - ▶ French
 - ▶ Spanish
 - ▶ Chinese
 - ▶ Korean
 - ▶ Punjabi
 - Plus Northern Territories



Physical Activity Counselling Toolkit

TOPICS

- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
- B. Making a physical activity plan
- C. Setting goals for physical activity
- D. What stops you from being physically active?
- E. Benefits of physical activity
- F. Physical activity and your blood pressure
- G. High blood pressure: how to stay safe when active
- H. Physical activity and Type 2 diabetes
- I. Diabetes: how to stay safe when active
- J. Healthy weight and physical activity
- K. Physical activity and anxiety
- L. Anxiety: how to stay safe when active
- M. Physical activity and chronic heart failure
- N. Chronic heart failure: how to stay safe when active
- O. Physical activity and stroke
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- R. Parkinson's Disease: how to stay safe when active
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- T. Dementia: how to stay safe when active



Taking the first step:

Deciding to be physically active

Your reasons to be more active

People decide to become more physically active for many reasons. Each person's reasons are different.

Read the questions below to help work you think about your reasons to become more active.

Take time to think about what motivates you to be physically active.

Staying the same (not being physically active)

What are the good things about not changing your level of physical activity?

If you aren't active, what effect could this have on your health and well-being in **five** years?

Being more physically active

If you become more active, what benefits would you get?

If you stay physically active, what benefits might you experience in **five** years?

This handout for adults will help you to think about:

- your reasons for deciding to be more physically active, and
- finding the motivation to stay active.

Adapted from Miller and Rollnick (2002)

Finding your motivation

It's important to think about what motivates you to be physically active. Knowing this can help you become more active and stay active!

Ask yourself:

What is the **worst thing** that might happen if you don't make this change?

What is the **best thing** that might happen if you do make this change?

Take time to think about what motivates you. Are you motivated by:



Your health?



A wish to be able to do more with your family and friends?



Wanting to have more energy and/or to sleep better?



A desire to feel more physically strong?






The short list above includes only a few ideas. You may have similar ones, or other ideas of your own.

Below, write down all the reasons that could motivate you to be physically active.

Find an activity you enjoy and can do easily.



Sometimes our motivation to be physically active is low. This is normal! Here are a few tips to help keep your motivation high:

-  Read through your answers on this handout often.
-  Find an activity you enjoy and can do easily.
-  Keep a log of when you are physically active and what you did.
-  See yourself as a person who is physically active.
-  Keep telling yourself you can do it!

Remember, it is important to:

- take time to think of reasons why you want to be more physically active, and
- learn what best motivates you to stay physically active.

Topics in this toolkit:

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The Centre for Active Living acknowledges M. Armstrong, MSc, CSEP-CEP, for her contributions in developing this resource.


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Making a physical activity plan

Sometimes becoming physically active can be hard.

If you feel this way, you are not alone!

One way to make it easier to get started is to make a physical activity plan.



Talk to your health care provider about activities that are best for you.

Step 1: Think about the 5 W's: WHY, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, and WHO

Read the questions below and write your answers in the space provided.

WHY is physical activity important to you?

WHAT type of physical activity(ies) do you want to do?

This handout for adults will take you through the steps to make your physical activity plan.

WHERE would you do the activity(ies)?

WHEN can you be active?

WHO can you be active with?

Step 2: Write out your physical activity plan

Here are some sample physical activity plans. Write your own plan on the following page.

Sample plan #1

WHY More energy; help to control my weight.
WHAT Walking.
WHERE Near my home and work.
WHEN To/from the public transit stop daily (about 10 minutes).
After supper every evening for 20 minutes.
WHO By myself to/from public transit.
With family members in evenings.

Sample plan #2

WHY My health; meet new people.
WHAT Aqua class.
WHERE Community pool.
WHEN Tuesday and Thursday, right after work.
WHO By myself, but hopefully meet others in the class.

Sample plan #3

WHY Sleep better; feel stronger.
WHAT Fitness video.
WHERE At home.
WHEN Weekday mornings, before work.
WHO By myself.

Ask your family and friends to support you.



My physical activity plan

Decide on your five W's and write your plan here.

WHY

WHAT

WHERE

WHEN

WHO

Step 3: Adding detail to your plan

The questions below will help you add more details to your plan.



How much time will you need for your activity?



Do you need special clothing or equipment?



What can you do to prepare for poor weather?



What are some problems you may run into when carrying out your physical activity plan?



What are some ideas to solve your problems?

Tips to help you *start* being active and *stay active*

- Ask your family and friends to support you.
- Find out about easy, fun ways to be active in your area.
- Find out which activities you can do at work or nearby, such as a fitness club or park.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about activities that are best for you.

Remember:

Often, taking the first steps towards more physical activity can be hard. The key is to develop a plan!

Once you have a **plan in place**, you will find it easier get started and begin working towards your physical activity goals.

Action Step

What is **one thing** you can do today to make this plan happen?

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Setting goals for physical activity

Setting goals is an important way to help increase your physical activity.

Answer the following questions. Write your answer in the space provided.

What are you doing NOW?

What activities do you do now?

How often during the week are you active? (Once a week? Twice a week? Daily?)

How long are your physical activity sessions? (15 minutes or less? Only a few minutes each time? 30 minutes or more?)

This handout for adults will help you to:

- learn how active you are now,
- set SMART goals,
- make smaller goals to help reach your SMART goals.

What activities would you LIKE to do?

What physical activities do you enjoy doing and find fun?

Are there activities that you are willing to try?

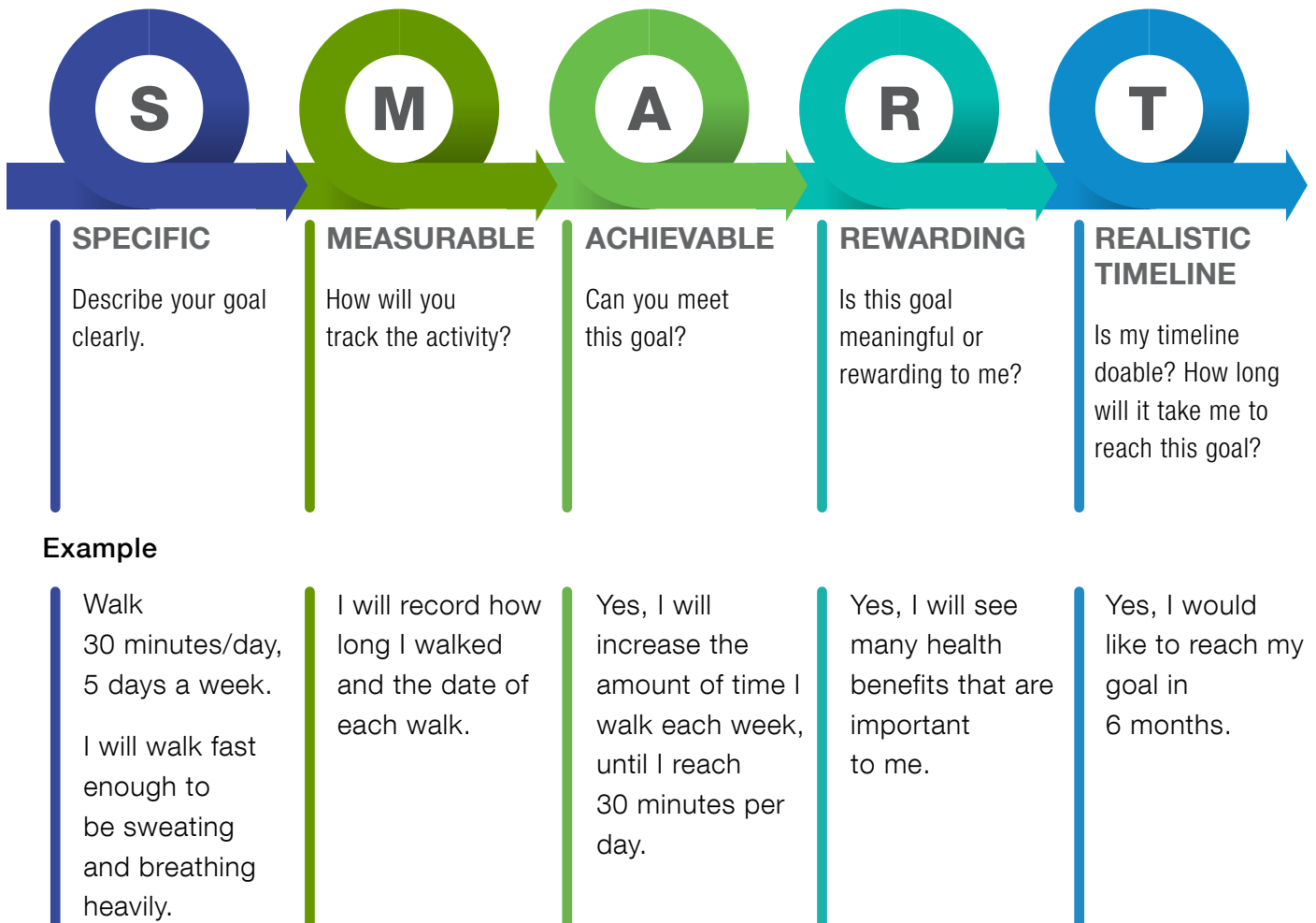
*Setting goals can
help you stay
physically active.*



Setting SMART goals

SMART goals are goals that are right for you.

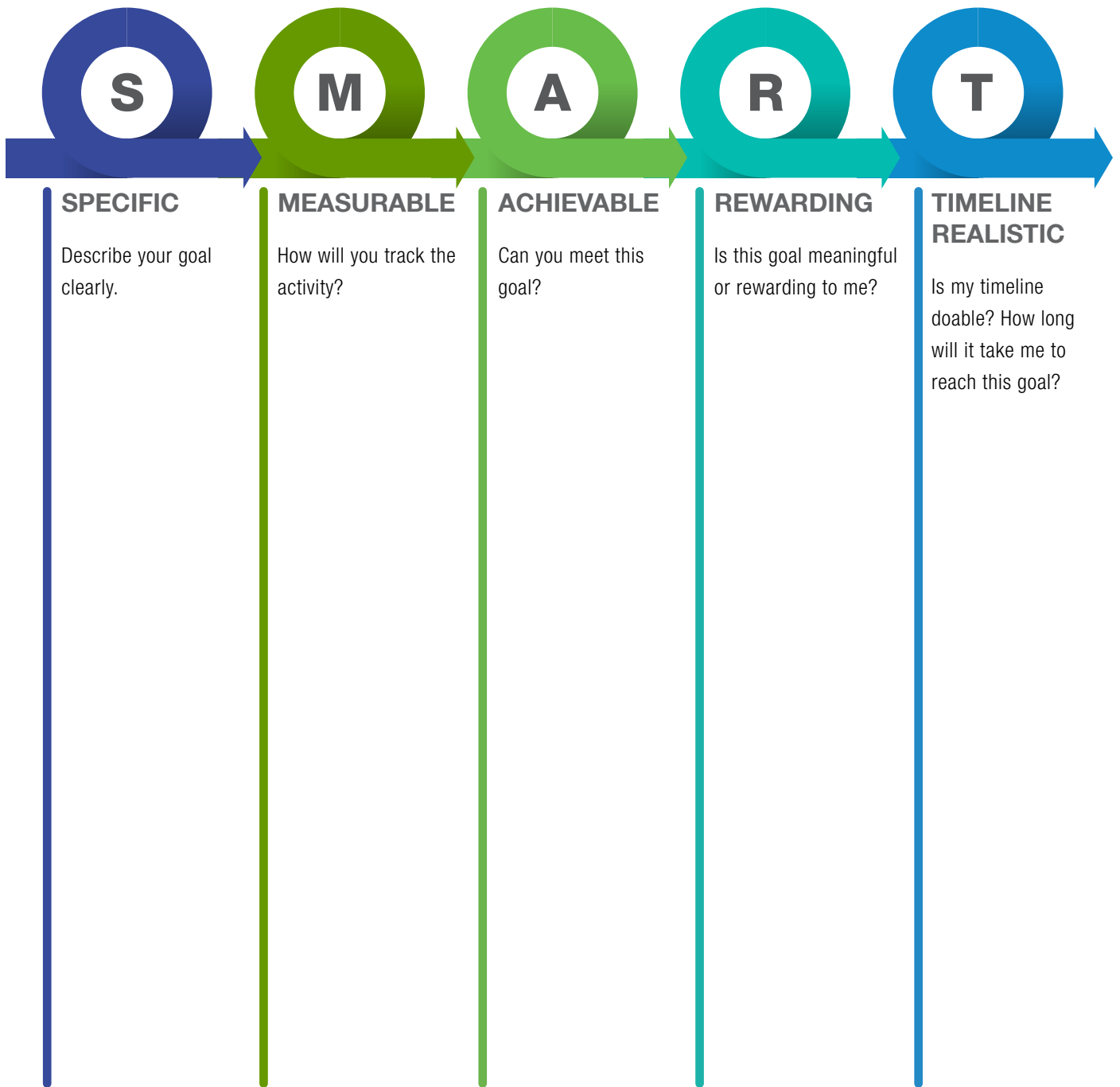
Read the chart below to learn how to set a SMART goal.



My own SMART chart

Use this as a tool to help you set your goals.

For each SMART goal you set, choose a goal that focuses on doing the **activity** (such as walking, swimming or cycling), rather than a **result** (such as weight loss).



Making small goals first

A great way to reach a SMART goal is to first break it into smaller goals or steps!

Read the example below to learn how one person set many small goals to reach a SMART goal.

SMART goal:

In 6 months, I will be walking for 30 minutes/day, five days a week!

Timeline	Small Goals:
1 st month	By the end of my first month, I will be walking at least 10 minutes/day, 3 days a week.
2 nd month	By the end of my second month, I will be walking at least 20 minutes/day , 3 days a week.
3 rd month	By the end of my third month, I will be walking at least 30 minutes/day , 3 days a week.
4 th month	By the end of my fourth month, I will be walking at least 30 minutes/day, 4 days a week .
5 th month	By the end of my fifth month, I will be walking at least 30 minutes/day, 5 days a week .
6 th month	I will continue to maintain walking for at least 30 minutes/day, at least 5 days a week .

Setting your own small goals

In the table below, create small goals or steps which will help you to reach your SMART goal. Set timelines for each small goal.

Write your SMART goal here

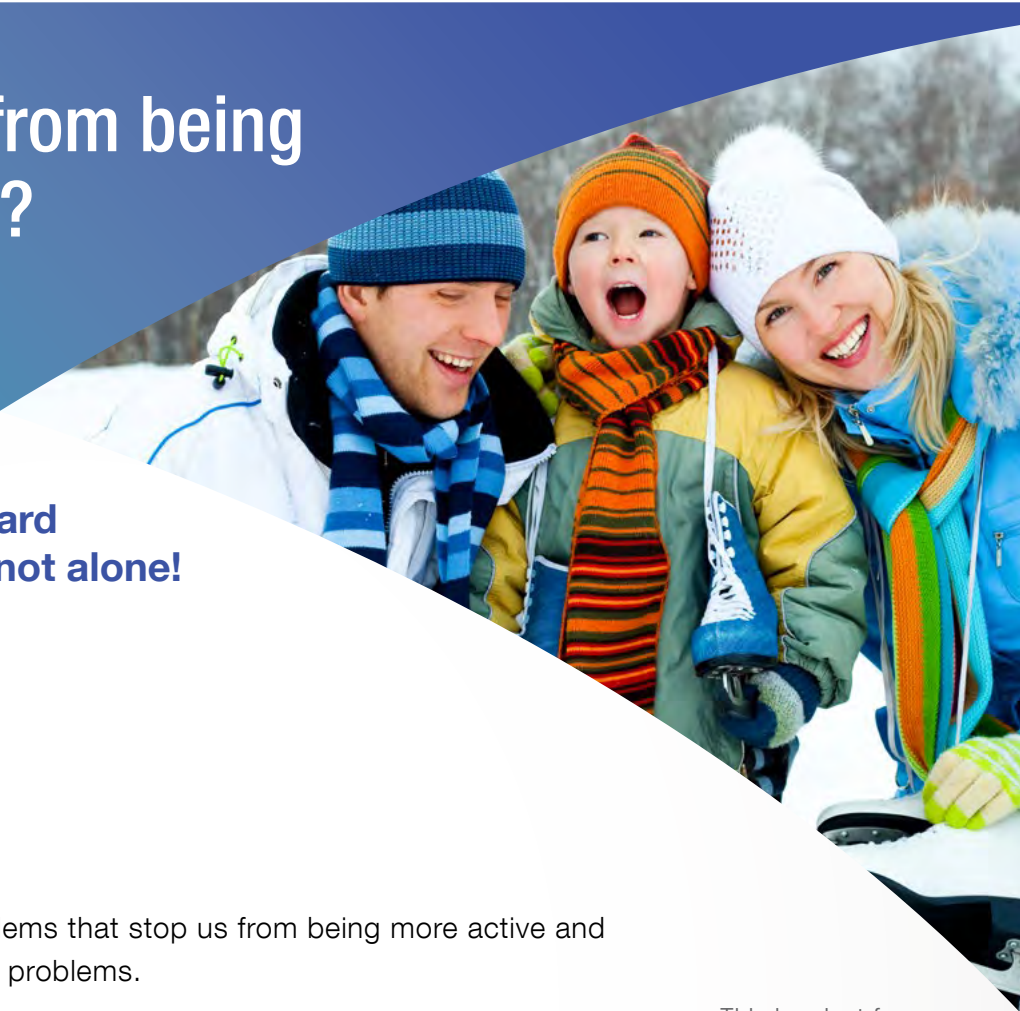
Your Timeline (months, weeks, days)	Small Goals or Steps

Topics in this toolkit:

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What stops you from being physically active?



Trying to be more physically active can be hard for many people. You are not alone!

You may face problems such as:

- no time,
- being tired, and
- having other priorities.

The boxes below lists common problems that stop us from being more active and offers tips to help you work on these problems.

Problem

Ways to work on the problem

"I am just not motivated."

- Make the decision to be active.
- Focus on doing the activity, rather than the results.
- Choose something fun.
- Focus on the short-term benefits, such as sleeping better and having more energy.

"I have no time."

- Be active for 10 minutes, three times each day.
- Make activity dates with yourself and keep them.
- Take "active breaks" at work.
- Walk or bike to work, and when doing errands.

This handout for adults will help you think about:

- what is stopping you from being more physically active and
- how to work on these problems.

Problem

Ways to work on the problem

"Poor weather."

- Plan ahead! Be ready to be active in any weather.
- Focus on the fresh air and being outside.
- Make a list of activities you will do in good weather and bad weather.
- When it's hot, bring water, wear a hat and find shade.
- When it's cold, dress in layers, and wear gloves and a warm hat.

"I feel tired and have no energy."

- Be active when you have the most energy, such as doing a morning or lunch-hour activity if you are too tired in the evening.
- Remind yourself that you will have more energy after your activity.
- Plan to be active with other people.

"I feel uncomfortable."

- "Physical activity" can be anything you like to do. It is not only about "exercise" or "working out."
- Choose activities that are comfortable for you, such as walking.
- Be active with others who you feel comfortable with (family and friends).
- Don't compare yourself to others.

"I have no one to be active with."

- Join an exercise class, a group or club.
- Make new friends who are already active.
- Invite friends to be active with you.
- Join a walking group at work, or in your community.

What stops you from being more active?

Write down your reasons in the table below.

For each reason, write down your ideas about how to work on the problem.

What stops me from being more active:	Ways to work on these problems:

Topics in this toolkit:

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Choose something fun for you.



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The Centre for Active Living acknowledges S.J. Cheetham, MSc, CSEP-CEP, for his contributions in developing this resource.

Benefits of physical activity

Regular physical activity boosts your physical health, your mental and emotional health, and your social health.

Here are just a few of the benefits:

Physical health benefits

- stronger muscles and bones,
- improves your heart health,
- reduces risk of chronic diseases,
- improves chronic disease symptoms, and
- helps to maintain a healthy body weight.

Mental and emotional health benefits

- improves your mood,
- helps you cope with stress and anxiety,
- feel better about yourself,
- sleep better, and
- great way to have fun.

Social health benefits

- great way to spend time with family,
- good way to see friends more often,
- excellent way to meet new people, and
- positive way to be involved in your community.

This handout for adults will help you to understand some of the benefits of physical activity.

Can you think of any other benefits that are important to you?

How would being more physically active improve your life? List your ideas:

Physical activity is a great way to meet new people and spend time with friends.



Health benefits timeline

We can see some of the benefits of physical activity right away! Other benefits may take more time and patience.

The boxes below provide a timeline of some health benefits.

Short-term (a single session of physical activity)

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| ↑ mood & energy | ↓ stress |
| ↑ self-esteem | ↓ depression |
| ↑ sleep | ↓ high blood sugar |
| ↑ concentration | ↓ bad cholesterol |
| ↑ good cholesterol | ↓ blood pressure |
| ↑ calories used | |

↑ = improve/increase

↓ = decrease/lower

Medium-term (4–8 weeks of regular physical activity)

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| ↑ muscle strength | ↓ body weight & body fat |
| ↑ bone & joint strength | ↓ joint pain & swelling |
| ↑ balance & posture | ↓ falls |
| ↑ heart health | ↓ bad cholesterol |
| ↑ insulin sensitivity | |

Long-term (months to years of regular physical activity)

- | | |
|--|---|
| ↑ quality of life and overall well-being | ↓ heart disease |
| ↑ your independence | ↓ osteoporosis (bone disease) |
| ↑ how long you live | ↓ dementia (such as Alzheimer's) |
| | ↓ certain cancers (such as colon & breast cancer) |

Action Step: **Circle** the benefits listed in the boxes above that are important to you.

What is one thing you can do today to start being more physically active?

Topics in this toolkit:

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Physical activity helps you cope with stress and anxiety and can help you feel good about yourself.



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Physical activity and your blood pressure

Having high blood pressure can lead to health problems, such as heart disease, stroke or kidney problems.

The good news is physical activity can help!

How much physical activity should I do?

It is important to be active most days of the week. Both **aerobic and resistance activities** can help reduce blood pressure. **Flexibility and balance activities** also have health benefits.



Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, cross-country skiing and swimming.



Resistance activities strengthen your muscles, such as push-ups, squats, lifting weights and aquatic exercises.



Balance and flexibility activities improve your range of motion and stability, reduce your risk of falls, and can prevent injury and strain, such as tai chi, pilates and yoga.

Monitor your intensity

Use the “talk test”:

- **low-intensity activity** is when you can talk or sing with ease; you do not experience any shortness of breath.
- **moderate-intensity activity** is when you can talk, but not sing.
- **vigorous-intensity activity** is when you are unable to say more than a few words before you need to pause for a breath.



This handout for adults describes:

- how much physical activity you should do and
- how physical activity can affect your blood pressure.

The following table describes your aerobic physical activity “prescription”.

Aerobic Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Warm up for 3–5 minutes *before* aerobic exercise.
- Aim for *150 minutes of aerobic activity per week*. For example,
 - ▶ 10 minutes, 3 times/day for 5 days,
 - ▶ 30 minutes/day for 5 days, or
 - ▶ 50 minutes/day for 3 days.
- Cool down for 3-5 minutes *after* aerobic exercise.

HOW HARD?

- Aim for a *moderate- to vigorous-intensity* level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats faster,
 - ▶ your body feels warmer,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ your breathing is deeper.
 - ▶ you can still talk easily, but not sing.

What aerobic activities would you like to do?

Note: A qualified exercise professional can show you some safe exercises that work best for you.



Resistance Physical Activity

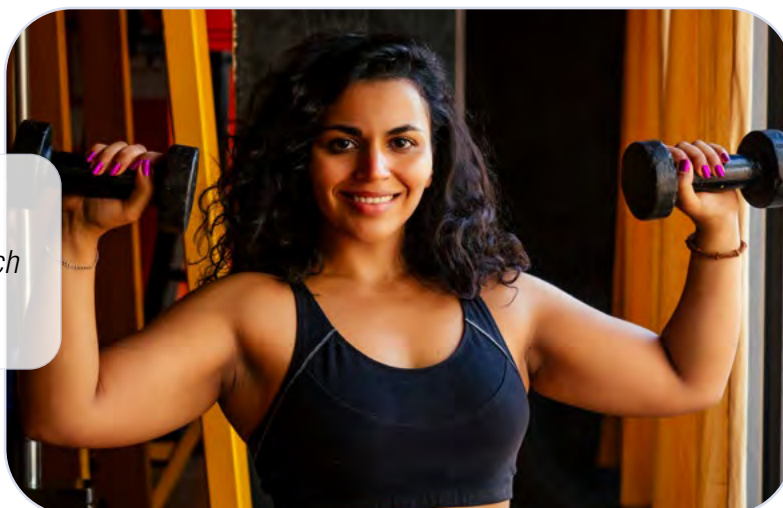
Resistance activities strengthens your muscles, such as training with free weights and resistance bands, or using your own body as resistance (for example, going from sitting to standing, or climbing stairs).

Work all your major muscle groups

It is important to do resistance activities for all of your major muscles.

- Choose 6–10 different activities for each session.
- Start at an intensity and duration that is safe for you. Slowly add the number of sets or how much you lift, as you feel comfortable.
- Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.
- Alternate between muscle groups to speed up your workout by allowing some muscles to rest while you work others. For example, you can choose a lower body exercise, such as squats, followed by an upper body exercise, such as chest presses.
- If you feel pain or cannot complete your set, the intensity may be too high. Reduce the weight you are using or the number of repetitions you are doing.
- Over time, you can slowly increase the number of sets that you do for each activity or slowly increase how much you lift.

Choose 6–10 different resistance activities for each session.



The following table describes your resistance physical activity “prescription”.

Resistance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Do one “set” of an exercise for 8–12 repetitions, such as 8–12 squats.
- Aim for:
 - ▶ 6–10 different resistance exercises,
 - ▶ 2–4 sets of *each exercise* per session,
 - ▶ at least 20 minutes per session,
 - ▶ 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Aim to work at a *moderate-intensity* level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ breathing is deeper and faster.
- Your muscles should feel exhausted by the end of the set, that is, you cannot do another repetition.
- *Rest* for
 - ▶ 2–4 minutes before starting a new set or muscle group,
 - ▶ at least 1 day between resistance training sessions.

What resistance physical activities would you like to do?

Note: A qualified exercise professional can show you what exercises work best for you and how to work at a safe intensity.

Balance Physical Activity

Balance is important as you age and can be practiced daily or as often as possible. Balance activities improve your motor skills and coordination, as well as reduce your risk of falling. They can be simple exercises, such as standing on one leg. They can include resistance or flexibility activities that emphasize balance and coordination, such as tai chi, pilates or yoga.

Activities should be challenging, but you should not feel unsafe, like you are about to fall. If you are at risk of falls, use supports, such as a chair or walker while doing the activities.

Examples of seated activities:

- range of motion exercises using arms and legs, such as arm or leg circles,
- coordinated movement of arms and legs.

Examples of standing exercises that can be done with or without hand support:

- standing on one foot,
- standing with feet close together,
- sit-to-stand,
- dynamic movements, such as kicking and catching,
- walking sideways and backwards or walking on or near a line.

Balance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*:

- 30 seconds/exercise,
- 20–30 minutes per session,
- 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *moderate-intensity* level. This means the activities:

- are challenging,
- require concentration, and
- may require you to hold a chair or wall for support sometimes.

What balance physical activities would you like to do?

Flexibility Physical Activity

Flexibility physical activity improves your range of motion. Daily flexibility activity is the most effective.

Do a variety of stretches that target both upper and lower body muscle groups. Include some stretching regularly in your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.

If the stretching activities are too hard, ask an exercise professional how to adapt them to match your level of flexibility.

Flexibility Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*:

- 2–4 repetitions of each exercise targeting the major muscles,
- 10 minutes per session,
- 2–3 times per week.

HOW HARD?

- Stretch to the point of mild discomfort or tightness (but not pain) and hold the stretch.
- Build up to holding each stretch for 30 seconds.

What flexibility physical activities would you like to do?

Build up to holding each stretch for 30 seconds.



When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active,
- **how often** you are active,
- **how hard** you work.

How does physical activity affect my blood pressure?

While you are *doing* an aerobic activity, your blood pressure changes.

- The top number (called systolic) will rise when you are active. The harder you work, the higher this number can go.
- The bottom number (called diastolic) will stay about the same. In some people, it may drop slightly. This is normal.
- If your blood pressure is too high, your healthcare provider may
 - ▶ tell you to monitor your blood pressure when you are active, or
 - ▶ give you blood pressure ranges, so you can stay safe when active.

Your blood pressure will be lower *after* you have done an aerobic physical activity.

- This decrease in your blood pressure can last several hours. This is one of the reasons why daily physical activity is recommended; you get health benefits right away!
- Often, those with very high blood pressure will see the greatest change.
- You may see a larger decrease if your physical activity session is longer, or if you work harder.

What is your current blood pressure?

What is your ideal blood pressure?

Blood pressure changes OVER TIME

Over time, regular physical activity may help you reach a healthy blood pressure level.



Fun Fact:

Most people who become regularly active can lower their systolic blood pressure by *eight points* and their diastolic pressure by *five points*.

Such as:

- Blood pressure before becoming active = 147/85
- Blood pressure after 4 months of being active = 139/80







The more often you are active, the sooner you may see these changes.



Keep it fun. Make physical activity a big part of your life.

More benefits

Being physically active on a regular basis can give you many other benefits, such as:

-  reducing your need for blood pressure medication,
-  improving how well your heart works,
-  giving you more control over your body weight,
-  helping you to manage stress,
-  improving how well you sleep, and
-  boosting your energy and strength.

Remember:

- Aerobic and resistance physical activities can help you manage and improve your blood pressure.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Keep it fun! Make fun physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do *today* to start being more active?

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High blood pressure:

how to stay safe when active

Various physical activities can help you manage and improve your blood pressure.

Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs. Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activities each week, such as brisk walking or swimming.

Resistance activities strengthen your muscles and your ability to push, pull, or lift. Aim to do resistance activities for 2 to 3 times each week.

Balance activities help to keep you on your feet and reduce your risk of falling.

Flexibility activities lengthen and stretch muscles that are tight and can help prevent injuries and muscle and joint pain. Aim to do balance and flexibility activities for 2 to 3 days a week.

It is important to be safe when you are active. Here are some safety tips for you to follow.

This handout for adults provides some safety tips for you to follow.

Medications and your safety

Are you on medication for your blood pressure, such as a diuretic, beta blocker or similar medication? Check with your healthcare provider to find out.

You can still be physically active, but you will need to follow a few safety steps.

- 1) Stay cool. Your medication may make it harder for your body to cool itself when you are active. Keep your body cool by:



drinking lots of water while being active,






being active in the morning or evening when it is cooler (if the weather is hot or humid), and



decreasing the intensity (how hard you push yourself) and/or the length of time you are active when the weather or workout location is hot or humid.

2) Your medication may affect your blood sugar levels. This may make you feel a bit light-headed. If you feel light-headed or dizzy:

-  stop your activity, or slow down,
-  take a glucose tablet, or eat a piece of candy, and
-  do not resume your activity until you feel well.

General safety tips

Here are some general safety tips to keep in mind when you are physically active:

- do not hold your breath,
- start with light- or moderate-intensity sessions,
- listen to your body and take breaks as needed, and
- always warm-up and cool-down.

Remember:

Aerobic, resistance, balance and flexibility physical activity can help you manage and improve your blood pressure. But make sure you stay safe and have fun when being physically active.

Drink lots of water before, during and after physical activity.



Topics in this toolkit:

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- H. Physical activity and Type 2 diabetes
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- J. Healthy weight and physical activity
- K. Physical activity and anxiety
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Physical activity and type 2 diabetes

Physical activity can help you to manage and improve your diabetes.

How much physical activity should I do?

To manage and improve your diabetes, try to be active most days of the week.

Both **aerobic and resistance activities** can help your diabetes. **Flexibility and balance activities** also have health benefits.



Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, cross-country skiing and swimming.



Resistance activities strengthen your muscles, such as push-ups, squats, lifting weights and aquatic exercises.



Balance and **flexibility** improve your range of motion and stability, reduce your risk of falls, and can prevent injury and strain, such as tai chi, pilates and yoga.

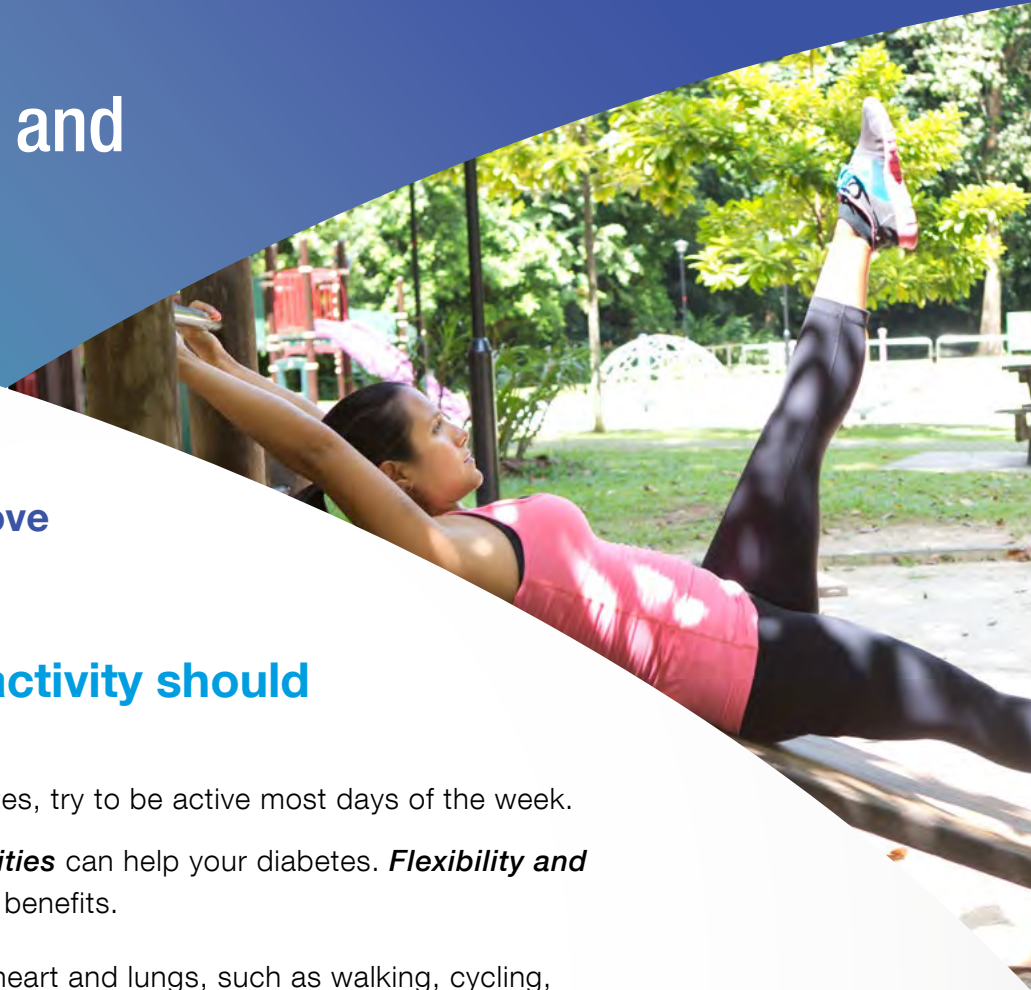
Monitor your intensity

Use the “talk test”:

- **low-intensity activity** is when you can talk or sing with ease; you do not experience any shortness of breath.
- **moderate-intensity activity** is when you can talk, but not sing.
- **vigorous-intensity activity** is when you are unable to say more than a few words before you need to pause for a breath.

This handout for adults describes:

- how much physical activity you should do, and
- how physical activity can affect your diabetes.



The following table describes your physical activity “prescription” for aerobic activities.

Aerobic Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Warm up for 3–5 minutes *before* aerobic exercise.
- Aim for *150 minutes of aerobic activity per week*. For example,
 - ▶ 10 minutes, 3 times/day for 5 days,
 - ▶ 30 minutes/day for 5 days, or
 - ▶ 50 minutes/day for 3 days.
- Cool down for 3-5 minutes *after* aerobic exercise.

HOW HARD?

- Aim for a *moderate- to vigorous-* intensity level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats faster,
 - ▶ your body feels warmer,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ your breathing is deeper,
 - ▶ you can still talk easily, but not sing.

What aerobic activities would you like to do?

Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activities per week.



Resistance Physical Activity

Resistance activities strengthens your muscles, such as training with free weights and resistance bands, or using your own body as resistance (for example, going from sitting to standing, or climbing stairs).

Work all your major muscle groups

It is important to do resistance activities for all of your major muscles.

- Choose 6–10 different activities for each session.
- Start at an intensity and duration that is safe for you.
- Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.
- Alternate between muscle groups to speed up your workout by allowing some muscles to rest while you work others. For example, you can choose a lower body exercise, such as squats, followed by an upper body exercise, such as chest presses.
- If you feel pain or cannot complete your set, the intensity may be too high. Reduce the weight you are using or the number of repetitions you are doing.
- Over time, you can slowly increase the number of sets that you do for each activity or slowly increase how much you lift.

Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.



The following table describes your resistance physical activity “prescription”.

Resistance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Do one “set” of an exercise for 10–15 repetitions, such as 10–15 squats.
- Aim for:
 - ▶ 6–10 different resistance exercises,
 - ▶ 2–4 sets of *each* exercise per session,
 - ▶ at least 20 minutes per session,
 - ▶ 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Aim to work at a *moderate-intensity* level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ breathing is deeper and faster.
- Your muscles should feel exhausted by the end of the set, that is, you cannot do another repetition.
- *Rest* for
 - ▶ 2–4 minutes before starting a new set or muscle group,
 - ▶ at least 1 day between resistance training sessions.

What resistance physical activities would you like to do?

Note: A qualified exercise professional can show you what exercises work best for you and how to work at a safe intensity.

Balance Physical Activity

Balance is important as you age and can be practiced daily or as often as possible. Balance activities improve your motor skills and coordination, as well as reduce your risk of falling. They can be simple exercises, such as standing on one leg. They can include resistance or flexibility activities that emphasize balance and coordination, such as tai chi, pilates or yoga.

Activities should be challenging, but you should not feel unsafe, like you are about to fall. If you are at risk of falls, use supports, such as a chair or walker while doing the activities.

Examples of seated activities:

- range of motion exercises using arms and legs, such as arm or leg circles,
- coordinated movement of arms and legs.

Examples of standing exercises that can be done with or without hand support:

- standing on one foot,
- standing with feet close together,
- sit-to-stand,
- dynamic movements, such as kicking and catching,
- walking sideways and backwards or walking on or near a line.

Balance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 30 seconds/exercise
- 20–30 minutes per session,
- 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *moderate-intensity* level. This means the activities:

- are challenging,
- require concentration, and
- may require you to hold a chair or wall for support sometimes.

What balance physical activities would you like to do?

Flexibility Physical Activity

Flexibility physical activity improves your range of motion. Daily flexibility activity is the most effective.

Do a variety of stretches that target both upper and lower body muscle groups. Include some stretching regularly in your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.

If the stretching activities are too hard, ask an exercise professional how to adapt them to match your level of flexibility.

Flexibility Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 2–4 repetitions of each exercise targeting the major muscles,
- 10 minutes per session,
- 2–3 times per week.

HOW HARD?

- Stretch to the point of mild discomfort or tightness (but not pain) and hold the stretch.
- Build up to holding stretches for 30 seconds.

What flexibility physical activities would you like to do?



Include some stretching regularly in your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active,
- **how often** you are active,
- **how many** activities you do,
- **how hard** you work.

How does physical activity help my diabetes?

Short-term benefit: lower blood sugar levels.

Your blood sugar levels will go down during and after physical activity.



The **short-term benefits of physical activity last 1-2 days after you are active**. So, don't wait more than 2 days between your physical activity sessions!

Long-term benefit: your body will use insulin better.







Over time, regular physical activity will increase your body's sensitivity to insulin. This means the sugar in your blood will be used more easily by your body throughout the day.

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.



More benefits

Being physically active on a regular basis can give you many other benefits, such as:

-  reducing your need for diabetes medication,
-  improving how well your heart works,
-  giving you more control over your body weight,
-  helping you to manage stress,
-  improving how well you sleep, and
-  boosting your energy and strength.

Remember:

- Aerobic and resistance physical activities can help you manage and improve your diabetes.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Keep it fun! Make fun physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do *today* to start being more active?

Topics in this toolkit:

- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
- B. Making a physical activity plan
- C. Setting goals for physical activity
- D. What stops you from being physically active?
- E. Benefits of physical activity
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Diabetes: how to stay safe when active

Aerobic, resistance, balance and flexibility physical activities are important for those who have diabetes.

Aerobic activities make you breathe a little harder and begin to sweat. Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activities each week, such as brisk walking or swimming.

Resistance activities make you use your muscles to push, pull or lift. Try to do resistance activities for 2 to 3 times a week.

Balance and **flexibility activities** help to improve your range of motion and stability, reduce your risk of falls, and can prevent injury and strain.

Blood sugar awareness

Do you take insulin or insulin-releasing pills? If you do, it is important for you to be aware of your blood sugar levels when you are active.

- Check your blood sugar levels **before, during and after** physical activity.
- This will help you to prevent and treat low blood sugar levels.
- This is really important if you are trying out new physical activities or routines.

If you take insulin, it's important for you to check your blood sugar levels when physically active.



This handout for adults gives you information to help you stay safe when you are active.

Topics include:

- blood sugar awareness,
- foot care,
- medication, and
- general safety tips for physical activity.

The chart below is for those who take insulin or insulin-releasing pills. It gives you blood sugar guidelines and safety recommendations to follow when you are physically active. Avoid exercise when your blood glucose control is poor.

To do: Use this chart with your healthcare provider to discuss how to best manage your blood glucose!

**BEFORE
physical
activity**

If your blood sugar is less than 5.6 mmol/L:

- it may be too low for you to be physically active at that time.
- you may need to eat a small snack before you begin (15 grams of carbohydrates, such as a piece of fruit or a slice of bread).

**DURING
physical
activity**

- Monitor blood sugar every 30 minutes.
- Watch for signs of low blood sugar, such as dizziness, headache or feeling confused.

If blood sugar is low (less than 4.0 mmol/L):

- stop and rest,
- have a snack (15 grams of fast-absorbing carbohydrates, such as a glucose tablet or candy with sugar),
- then test your blood sugar 15 minutes later.

Continue your activity once your blood sugar returns to a safe range.

**AFTER
physical
activity**

- Check your blood sugar levels right away.
- Check 2-3 times over the next two hours.

If blood sugar is low (less than 4.0 mmol/L):

- have a snack (15 grams of fast-absorbing carbohydrates, such as a glucose tablet or candy with sugar),
- then test your blood sugar 15 minutes later.

More safety tips

- Be active 1–2 hours after you have eaten.
- Do not be active right after you have taken insulin.
- Avoid being active late in the evening, to prevent low blood sugar as you sleep.
- Carry a form of fast-acting sugar with you. For example, carry glucose tablets, or small candies with sugar in them.
- Discuss with your healthcare provider how you can prevent low blood sugar with your insulin medicine and your diet.

Foot care

Taking care of your feet is very important if you have diabetes.

Speak to your healthcare provider to find out if your feet are at risk or may give you problems when being physically active.

Are you are worried about your feet?

You may prefer to do physical activities that do not require you to be on your feet for too long.

These activities help to take some of the pressure off your feet:

- rowing,
- activities in the water, such as water aerobics, water jogging, swimming,
- cycling (indoors or outside) or arm-cycling, and
- seated exercises.

Here are more tips to keep your feet in good shape:

- Only wear shoes that fit well.
- Check your feet daily for sores or wounds. If they need to heal, delay your physical activities as needed, or try some of the activities listed above.
- Always get foot injuries examined right away.
- When active for awhile, make sure to take a break and check your feet.



Check your feet daily for sores or wounds.

Medications and your safety

Are you taking medication for your blood pressure? Check with your healthcare provider to find out.

You can still be physically active, but you will need to follow a few safety steps:

- 1) Stay cool. Your medication may make it harder for your body to cool itself when you are active. Keep your body cool by:



drinking lots of water while being active,



being active in the morning or evening when it is cooler (if the weather is hot or humid), or



decreasing the intensity (how hard you push yourself) and/or the length of time you are active when the weather or workout location is hot or humid.

- 2) Your medication may affect your blood sugar levels. This may make you feel a bit light-headed. If you feel light-headed or dizzy:



stop your activity, or slow down,



take a glucose tablet, or eat a piece of candy, and



do not resume your activity until you feel well.

General Safety Tips

Here are some general safety tips to keep in mind when you are active.

- Always warm-up and cool-down.
- Listen to your body and take breaks as needed.
- Drink water before, during and after physical activity.
- Wear your Medical Alert/ID bracelet.

Remember:

Aerobic, resistance, balance, and flexibility activities can help you manage and improve your diabetes. But make sure you stay safe and have fun when being physically active.

Topics in this toolkit:

- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
- B. Making a physical activity plan
- C. Setting goals for physical activity
- D. What stops you from being physically active?
- E. Benefits of physical activity
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Healthy weight and physical activity

Many of us know that having a healthy body weight is important for our health.

However, we also know that managing our body weight is not easy. The good news is that regular physical activity can help you reach and keep a healthy weight.

How much physical activity should I do?

Aerobic activities are best when it comes to managing your weight.



Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, cross-country skiing and swimming.

You do not have to play a sport to be physically active. Walking is a great physical activity, as it is free of charge, it can be done anywhere, and it requires little equipment (only appropriate shoes and clothing for the weather). You can decide the intensity, speed, and terrain.



Resistance activities strengthen your muscles, such as resistance bands, free weights, gardening, and sit-to-stand exercises. Even small weights can improve strength, like lifting soup cans.



Balance and flexibility activities can improve your range of motion and stability, reduce your risk of falls, and prevent injury and strain, such as tai chi, pilates and yoga.

This handout for adults will explain:

- how much physical activity you should do, and
- how physical activity can help you to manage your weight.

The following table describes your physical activity “prescription” for **aerobic activities**.

Aerobic Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Warm up for 3–5 minutes *before* aerobic exercise.
- Aim for *150–300 minutes of aerobic activity per week*. For example, 150 minutes can be:
 - ▶ 10 minutes, 3 times/day for 5 days,
 - ▶ 30 minutes/day for 5 days, or
 - ▶ 50 minutes/day for 3 days.
- Cool down for 3–5 minutes *after* aerobic exercise.

HOW HARD?

- Aim for a *moderate-to-vigorous* intensity level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats faster,
 - ▶ your body feels warmer,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ your breathing is deeper.
 - ▶ you can still talk easily, but not sing.

What aerobic activities would you like to do?

Aim for 150–300 minutes of aerobic activities per week.



Resistance Physical Activity

Resistance activities strengthens your muscles, such as training with free weights and resistance bands, or using your own body as resistance (for example, going from sitting to standing, or climbing stairs).

Work all your major muscle groups

It is important to do resistance activities for all of your major muscles.

- Choose 6–10 different activities for each session.
- Start at an intensity and duration that is safe for you.
- Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.
- Alternate between muscle groups to speed up your workout by allowing some muscles to rest while you work others. For example, you can choose a lower body exercise, such as squats, followed by an upper body exercise, such as chest presses.
- If you feel pain or cannot complete your set, the intensity may be too high. Reduce the weight you are using or the number of repetitions you are doing.
- Over time, you can slowly increase the number of sets that you do for each activity or slowly increase how much you lift.

Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.



The following table describes your resistance physical activity “prescription”.

Resistance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Do one “set” of an exercise for 10-15 repetitions, such as 10-15 squats.
- Aim for:
 - ▶ 6–10 different resistance exercises,
 - ▶ 2–4 sets of *each* exercise per session,
 - ▶ at least 20 minutes per session,
 - ▶ 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Aim to work at a *moderate-intensity* level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ breathing is deeper and faster.
- Your muscles should feel exhausted by the end of the set, that is, you cannot do another repetition.
- *Rest* for
 - ▶ 2–4 minutes before starting a new set or muscle group,
 - ▶ at least 1 day between resistance training sessions.

What resistance physical activities would you like to do?

Note: A qualified exercise professional can show you what exercises work best for you and how to work at a safe intensity.

Balance Physical Activity

Balance is important as you age and can be practiced daily or as often as possible. Balance activities improve your motor skills and coordination, as well as reduce your risk of falling. They can be simple exercises, such as standing on one leg. They can include resistance or flexibility activities that emphasize balance and coordination, such as tai chi, pilates or yoga.

Activities should be challenging, but you should not feel unsafe, like you are about to fall. If you are at risk of falls, use supports, such as a chair or walker while doing the activities.

Examples of seated activities:

- range of motion exercises using arms and legs, such as arm or leg circles,
- coordinated movement of arms and legs.

Examples of standing exercises that can be done with or without hand support:

- standing on one foot,
- standing with feet close together,
- sit-to-stand,
- dynamic movements, such as kicking and catching,
- walking sideways and backwards or walking on or near a line.

Balance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 15–30 minutes per session,
- 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *moderate-intensity level*. This means the activities:

- are challenging,
- require concentration, and
- may require you to hold a chair or wall for support sometimes.

What balance physical activities would you like to do?

Flexibility Physical Activity

Flexibility physical activity improves your range of motion. Daily flexibility activity is the most effective.

Do a variety of stretches that target both upper and lower body muscle groups. Include some stretching regularly in your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.

If the stretching activities are too hard, ask an exercise professional how to adapt them to match your level of flexibility.

Flexibility Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 2–4 repetitions of each exercise targeting the major muscles,
- 10 minutes per session,
- 2–3 times per week.

HOW HARD?

- Stretch only to the point of mild discomfort or tightness (but not pain).
- Build up to holding each stretch for 30 seconds.

What flexibility physical activities would you like to do?

Make stretching a regular part of your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.



When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active,
- **how often** you are active,
- **how many** activities you do,
- **how hard** you work.

Physical activity and managing your weight

The food you eat and your eating habits are very important to weight management. However, physical activity can also help!

Physical activity helps you to:

- use more energy (burn more calories),
- lower stress and improve how well you sleep,
- improve how your heart works, and
- increase your overall strength.

There are three steps to managing your weight:

- 1) stopping weight gain,
- 2) losing weight, and
- 3) maintaining weight loss.

Walking is a great physical activity, as it is free of charge and it can be done anywhere.



1) Stopping weight gain

Before you can lose weight, your first step should be to focus on stopping *further weight gain*.

It is important to find out why you have gained weight. Talk to your health care provider about this.

Changing your diet and being more physically active can help you to stop gaining weight.



Myth: If I am more physically active, I can eat what I want.

Fact: It takes a lot of physical activity to “burn off” what we eat. For example, it takes about:

- 1 hour of walking to “burn off” a can of pop.
- 7 hours of walking to “burn off” a typical fast food meal (a burger, fries and a pop).

2) Losing weight

An achievable weight loss goal is an important first step. Although sustained weight loss of as little as 3–5% of body weight may lead to reductions in some cardiovascular risk factors, larger weight losses produce greater benefits. Experts suggest an initial goal the loss of 5–10% of the starting weight within 6 months.

Physical activity helps you to:

- keep your energy levels high,
- use more calories, and
- build your strength.

Talk to your healthcare professional about setting a healthy weight loss goal.

People living with obesity benefit from comprehensive approaches including: behaviour modification techniques, cognitive behavioural therapy, activity enhancement, and dietary counseling. Evidence shows that weight loss programs should involve a health team from many professions to treat a person’s obesity.



Did you know that physical activity by itself does not always lead to weight loss?

Long-term weight management requires comprehensive approaches to lifestyle change: diet, physical activity, and behavioral changes.

Make sure healthy food and healthy eating habits are part of your weight loss plan. Talk to a dietitian to learn about any changes you could make.

3) Staying at your new weight after weight loss

To avoid regaining the weight you lost, stay active!

- Find activities you enjoy and can easily do.
- Get your family and friends involved. Being physically active with others can help keep you motivated.
- Be active at times and places that work for you and that fit easily into your life.
- Continue to make physical activity and healthy food choices a part of your life.



Fact: People who remain physically active on a regular basis after they lose weight are more likely to stay at their new body weight.

*Find activities you enjoy
and can easily do.*



Remember:

- Regular physical activity can help you reach and keep a healthy body weight.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Keep it fun! Having a regularly physically active lifestyle is more important than weight loss. Make fun physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do *today* to start being more active?

Get your family and friends involved. Being physically active with others can help keep you motivated.



Topics in this toolkit:

- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
- B. Making a physical activity plan
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Physical activity and anxiety

Anxiety is a normal emotion that helps motivate, prepare, and protect you.

However, too much anxiety can interfere with living a healthy, fulfilling life.

Physical activity can reduce anxiety in all adults, including those with anxiety disorders. If you are experiencing symptoms of anxiety, regular physical activity can help you manage your symptoms.

How much and what types of physical activity should I do?

To manage your anxiety, it is important to be active on most days of the week.

Aerobic activities can reduce symptoms of anxiety. **Resistance, flexibility, and balance activities** also have general health benefits.



Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as brisk walking, cycling, jogging, running, cross-country skiing, dancing, stair climbing, swimming, and aerobics classes.



Resistance activities strengthen your muscles, such as push-ups, squats, lifting weights and aquatic activities.



Balance and flexibility activities improve your range of motion and stability, reduce your risk of falls, and can prevent injury and strain, such as tai chi, pilates and yoga.

A well-rounded physical activity routine includes all four of these types of activities.

This handout for adults describes:

- how much physical activity you should do, and
- how physical activity can help you manage your anxiety.

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active
- **how often** you are active
- **how many** activities you do
- **how hard** you work

Monitor your intensity

Use the “talk test”:

- **low-intensity activity** is when you can talk or sing with ease; you do not experience any shortness of breath.
- **moderate-intensity activity** is when you can talk, but not sing.
- **vigorous-intensity activity** is when you are unable to say more than a few words before you need to pause for a breath.

Aerobic Physical Activity

Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, and swimming.

The following table describes your aerobic physical activity “prescription”.

Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activities per week.



Aerobic Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Warm up for 3–5 minutes *before* aerobic exercise.
- Aim for *150 minutes of aerobic activity per week*. For example,
 - ▶ 10 minutes, 3 times/day for 5 days,
 - ▶ 30 minutes/day for 5 days, or
 - ▶ 50 minutes/day for 3 days.
- Cool down for 3-5 minutes *after* aerobic exercise.

HOW HARD?

- Aim for a *moderate- to vigorous-* intensity level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats faster,
 - ▶ your body feels warmer,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ your breathing is deeper,
 - ▶ you can still talk easily, but not sing.

What aerobic activities would you like to do?

Resistance Physical Activity

Resistance activities strengthens your muscles, such as training with free weights and bodyweight exercises such as a squat.

Work all your major muscle groups

It is important to do resistance activities for all of your major muscles.

- Choose 6–10 different activities for each session.
- Start at any duration and intensity and slowly increase them as you feel comfortable.
- Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.
- Alternate between muscle groups to speed up your workout by allowing some muscles to rest while you work others. For example, you can choose a lower body exercise, such as squats, followed by an upper body exercise, such as chest presses.
- If you feel pain or cannot complete your set, the intensity may be too high. Reduce the weight you are using or the number of repetitions you are doing.
- Over time, you can slowly increase the number of sets that you do for each activity or slowly increase how much you lift.

Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.



The following table describes your resistance physical activity “prescription”.

Resistance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Do one “set” of an exercise for 10-15 repetitions, such as 10-15 squats.
- Aim for:
 - ▶ 6–10 different resistance exercises,
 - ▶ 2–3 sets of *each* exercise per session,
 - ▶ 1–4 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Aim to work at a *moderate-intensity* level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ breathing is deeper and faster.
- Your muscles should feel exhausted by the end of the set, that is, you cannot do another repetition.
- *Rest* for
 - ▶ 2–4 minutes before starting a new set or muscle group,
 - ▶ at least 1 day between resistance training sessions.

What resistance physical activities would you like to do?

Balance Physical Activity

Balance activities improve your motor skills and coordination, as well as reduce your risk of falling. They can be simple exercises, such as standing on one leg. Balance activities may also be resistance or flexibility activities that emphasize balance and coordination, such as tai chi, pilates or yoga.

Activities should be challenging, but you should not feel unsafe, like you are about to fall. Depending on your balancing abilities, activities can be done while seated or standing.

Examples of seated activities:

- range of motion exercises using arms and legs, such as arm or leg circles,
- coordinated movement of arms and legs.

Examples of standing exercises that can be done with or without hand support:

- standing on one foot,
- standing with feet close together,
- sit-to-stand,
- dynamic movements, such as kicking and catching,
- walking sideways and backwards or walking on or near a line.

Balance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*:

- 30 seconds/exercise
- 15–30 minutes per session
- 2–3 days per week

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *moderate-intensity* level. This means the activities:

- are challenging
- require concentration
- may require you to hold a chair or wall for support sometimes

What balance physical activities would you like to do?

Flexibility Physical Activity

Flexibility physical activity improves your range of motion. Daily flexibility activity is the most effective. Do a variety of stretches that target both upper and lower body muscle groups. Include some stretching regularly in your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.

If the stretching activities are too hard, ask an exercise professional how to adapt them to match your level of flexibility.

Flexibility Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 2–4 repetitions of each exercise targeting the major muscles,
- 10 minutes per session,
- 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Stretch to the point of mild discomfort or tightness (but not pain) and hold the stretch just below this discomfort.
- Build up to holding stretches for 30 seconds.

What flexibility physical activities would you like to do?

Note: A qualified exercise professional can motivate and support you to develop a physical activity program. Check for local programs or exercise professionals with expertise or experience working with clients who have anxiety.

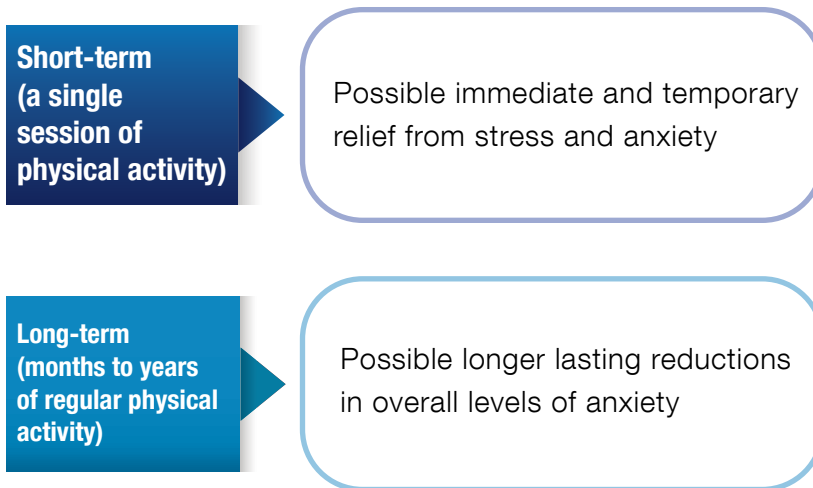
The exercise outlined here is a goal to build up to. If you have an injury or other health condition, adapt your exercise program until you are ready.

Remember, **doing any activity is better than not doing anything at all!**

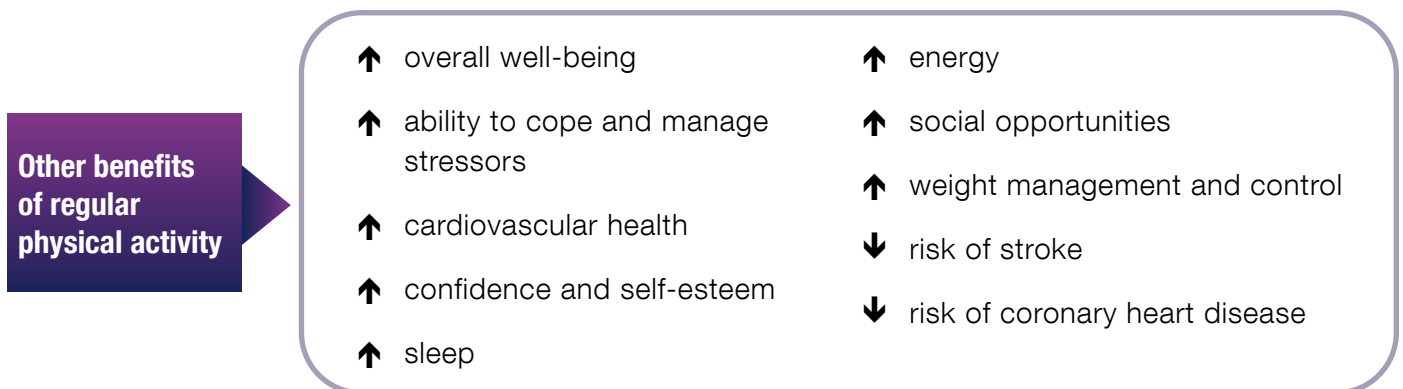
How can physical activity help my symptoms of anxiety?

Physical activity can reduce immediate and long-term anxiety symptoms, such as improved concentration, decreased irritation, and reduced restlessness, worrying, tension, and fatigue.

Everyone responds differently to physical activity. You may experience a long-term reduction in symptoms; you may experience short-term benefits; or you may experience very little effect. To determine how different activities affect you, keep a journal of your physical activity sessions and anxiety symptoms.



Physical activity can improve your physical health, particularly if you have high anxiety and a higher risk of harmful physical health effects, such as high blood pressure and heart disease.



↑ = improve/increase

↓ = decrease/lower

Being physically active can be a fun, low-cost, accessible, and safe option to help reduce your anxiety symptoms.

It is important to discuss treatment options with your healthcare provider and to follow the medications and treatments prescribed to you.

Remember:

- Aerobic and resistance activities can help you manage and improve your anxiety.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Keep it fun! Make physical activity a lasting part of your life by doing activities that you enjoy.

What is one thing you can do *today* to start being more active?

Keep it fun! Make physical activity a lasting part of your life.



Topics in this toolkit:

- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
- B. Making a physical activity plan
- C. Setting goals for physical activity
- D. What stops you from being physically active?
- E. Benefits of physical activity
- F. Physical activity and your blood pressure
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Anxiety: how to stay safe when active

Aerobic, resistance, balance and flexibility physical activities are important for those who have anxiety.

Aerobic activities make you breathe a little harder and begin to sweat. Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activities each week, such as brisk walking or swimming.

Resistance activities make you use your muscles to push, pull or lift. Try to do resistance activities 2 to 3 times a week.

Balance activities help to keep you on your feet and reduce your risk of falling.

Flexibility activities lengthen and stretch muscles that are tight or restrained and can help prevent injuries and muscle and joint pain throughout the body. Both balance and flexibility activities should be done 2 to 4 days a week.

Anxiety medications and physical activity

If you are taking medications for anxiety or another condition, talk with your physician about possible side effects and how they may influence your ability to be physically active.

Medications for treating anxiety may include selection serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs), benzodiazepines, and beta-blockers. These medications should not stop you from being physically active. However, you may experience side effects such as:

- drowsiness and fatigue,
- decreased attention and alertness,
- dizziness and loss of balance, and
- altered blood pressure and heart rate.

This handout for adults gives you information to help you stay safe and be well when you are active.

Topics include:

- medication,
- special considerations for being active with anxiety, and
- general safety tips for physical activity.

If you feel drowsy or dizzy after taking your medication, then schedule your workout well before or after taking your medication. Then you will have the energy needed for your workout and can avoid an injury.

If your medication affects your heart rate, be sure not to use a heart rate monitor to track your training intensity.

Other concerns for being active with anxiety

It is a good idea to speak with your healthcare provider before starting a physical activity program. They can use the [Get Active Questionnaire](#), a simple checklist to see if you are ready for a moderate-intensity physical activity program: <https://tinyurl.com/activequestionnaire>

Some individuals may have physical symptoms of anxiety, such as chest pains or heart palpitations (the heart is racing, pounding or fluttering). Individuals with heart disease may have similar symptoms. If you experience these symptoms, speak with your doctor before starting your physical activity program.

Anxiety and physical activity avoidance





It's possible that you may experience more anxiety during an activity session when you are first starting out. The body's response to physical activity includes increased heart rate, breathlessness and sweating. This can feel like the physical response to anxiety, leading some to avoid activity.

Other sources of anxiety might also be a fear of others evaluating you, fear of getting injured, worries around exercising incorrectly, and uncertainty of how to use exercise equipment.

Get emotional and helpful support from family and friends to keep you motivated.



If anxiety is causing you to avoid physical activity, here are some tips:

-  Begin slowly! Start where you are comfortable. For example, jog on the spot for 30 seconds, increase to 45 seconds, and then to 1 minute. Slowly allow yourself to get used to the physical sensations.
-  If you need to stop during an activity session due to anxiety, that's ok! Take the time you need and come back to it when you are calm and feel ready.
-  Choose a setting that is comfortable for you. If gyms or outdoor settings make you uncomfortable, then start at home. As you develop your confidence and physical skills, challenge yourself by going to new and potentially enjoyable environments (e.g., a gym, a fitness studio, an outdoor park, or a walking trail).
-  A mental health professional can help change your thoughts about your body's responses or others' perceptions of you. They can also teach you strategies, including grounding techniques and breathing exercises, which can help when you feel anxious during activity.

Maintaining motivation with anxiety

- Staying motivated can be difficult for anyone, but this may be especially true if you are affected by anxiety. Keep goals achievable and build slowly.
- If you fail to meet a goal, don't be too discouraged; physical activity can be a rewarding experience in and of itself. It is important that you find activities that are meaningful and enjoyable to you.
- Accept setbacks as part of the growth process. If your anxiety causes you to stop or miss a workout, or several, do not be discouraged. Be kind to yourself. Change takes time and set-backs are normal.
- Get emotional and helpful support from family and friends to keep you motivated. Dogs can also be great walking partners!
- An exercise professional may also help you stick to a program. Find a professional that knows about, or is at least sensitive to, your condition. You can even find a professional to meet you at home or you can enroll in online training classes if you are not yet comfortable being active in public settings.

- Anxiety very often occurs with depression. In fact, roughly half of individuals with major depressive disorder also experience an anxiety disorder. If you experience depression, consider using the toolkit available at: exerciseanddepression.ca/

General Safety Tips

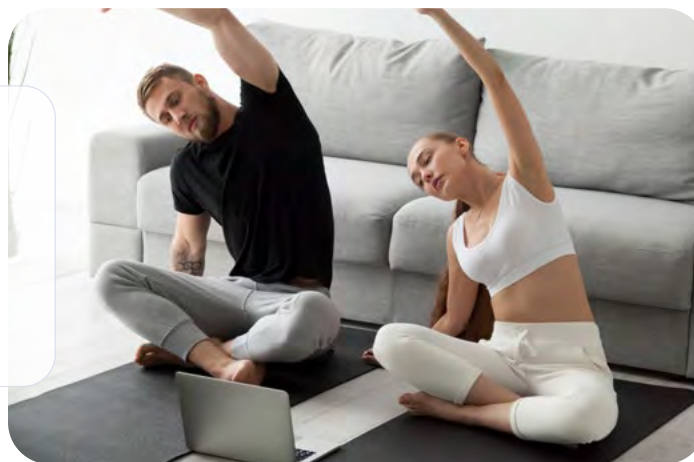
Here are some general safety tips to keep in mind when you are active.

- Always warm-up and cool-down.
- Don't push too hard too fast! Start out with what's comfortable and progress gradually.
- Listen to your body and take breaks as needed.
- Drink water before, during and after physical activity.
- Stay safe during activity! While some minor discomfort might be normal when beginning physical activity, you should stop exercising any time you have chest pain or problems breathing. Talk with your doctor about these symptoms.

Remember:

Physical activity can help you manage and improve your anxiety. But make sure you stay safe and have fun when being physically active.

Don't push too hard too fast! Start out with what's comfortable and progress gradually.



Topics in this toolkit:

- Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
- Making a physical activity plan
- Setting goals for physical activity
- What stops you from being physically active?
- Benefits of physical activity
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Physical activity and chronic heart failure

Physical activity can help you to manage and improve your symptoms when living with chronic heart failure.

How much physical activity should I do?

To manage and improve your symptoms when living with chronic heart failure, try to be active most days of the week.

Aerobic, resistance, balance and **flexibility activities** can help your symptoms of chronic heart failure.



Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, cross-country skiing and swimming.



Resistance activities strengthen your muscles, such as push-ups, squats, lifting weights and aquatic exercises.



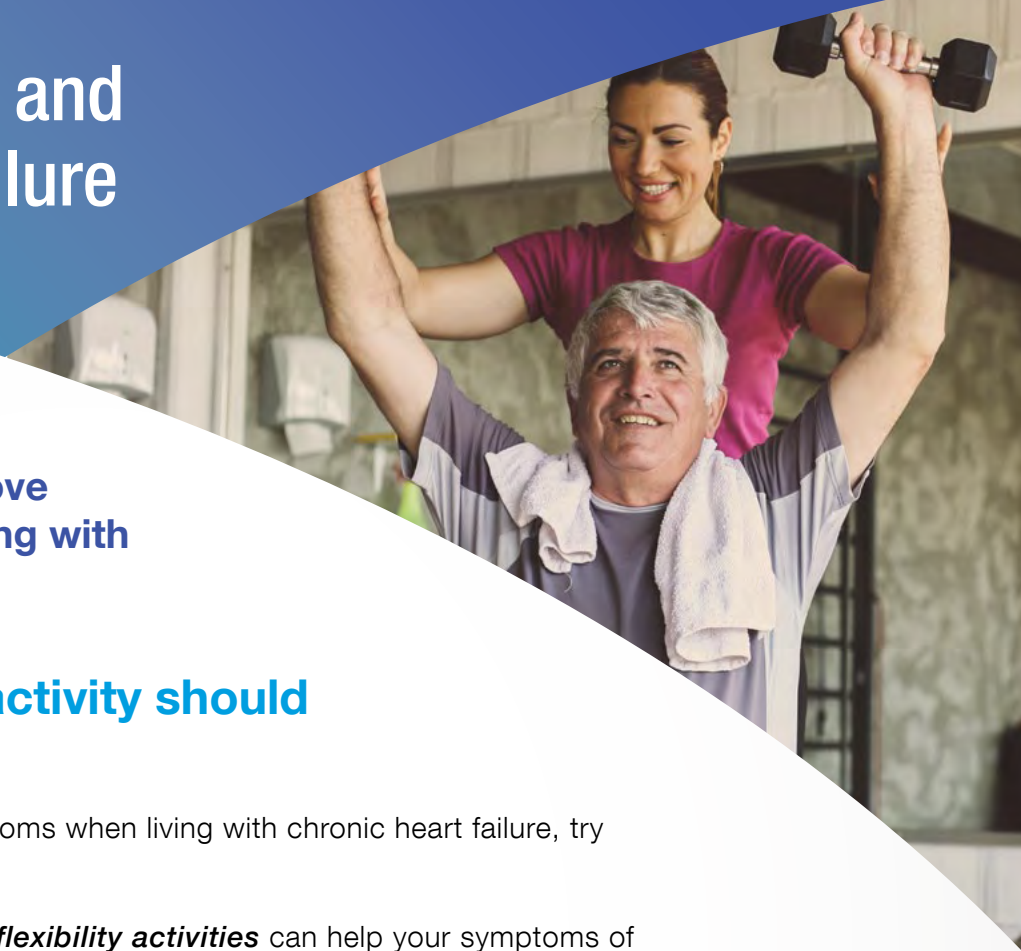
Balance and flexibility activities improve your range of motion and stability, reduce your risk of falls, and can prevent injury and strain, such as tai chi, pilates and yoga.

Consider attending a cardiac rehabilitation program. Cardiac rehabilitation offers structured programs led by qualified healthcare providers. Research shows that cardiac rehabilitation improves quality of life for patients with chronic heart failure.

Before starting a physical activity program, ask your physician when exercise is safe for you.

This handout for adults describes:

- how much physical activity you should do, and
- how physical activity can affect your symptoms when living with chronic heart failure.



Start at a level that is right for you

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As the exercise becomes easier, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active,
- **how often** you are active,
- **how many** activities you do,
- **how hard** you work.

Monitor your intensity

Use the “talk test”:

- **low-intensity activity** is when you can talk or sing with ease; you do not experience any shortness of breath.
- **moderate-intensity activity** is when you can talk, but not sing.
- **vigorous-intensity activity** is when you are unable to say more than a few words before you need to pause for a breathe.

Examples of low- to moderate-intensity physical activities include walking at different speeds, gardening, swimming, and cycling.

Examples of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activities include brisk walking, jogging, and cycling.

Moderate-intensity endurance exercise programs are generally safe and beneficial for individuals with chronic heart failure and who are stable. Be sure to discuss this type of exercise with your doctor before beginning a program.

Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activities per week.



Aerobic Physical Activity

Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, and swimming

The following table describes your physical activity “prescription” for aerobic activities.

Aerobic Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Warm up for 3–5 minutes *before* aerobic exercise.
- Aim for *150 minutes of aerobic activity per week*. For example,
 - ▶ 10 minutes, 3 times/day for 5 days,
 - ▶ 30 minutes/day for 5 days, or
 - ▶ 50 minutes/day for 3 days.
- Cool down for 3-5 minutes *after* aerobic exercise.

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *low- to moderate-intensity* level.

- Low- to moderate-intensity means:
 - ▶ your heart beats faster than when you are resting or sitting,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ your breathing is deeper and faster,
 - ▶ you can talk and sing easily.

What aerobic activities would you like to do?

Resistance Physical Activity

Resistance activities strengthens your muscles, such as training with free weights and bodyweight exercises such as a squat.

Work all your major muscle groups

It is important to do resistance activities for all of your major muscles.

- Choose 6–10 different activities for each session.
- Start at any duration and intensity and slowly increase them as you feel comfortable.
- Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.
- Alternate between muscle groups to speed up your workout by allowing some muscles to rest while you work others. For example, you can choose a lower body exercise, such as squats, followed by an upper body exercise, such as chest presses.
- If you feel pain or cannot complete your set, the intensity may be too high. Reduce the weight you are using or the number of repetitions you are doing.
- Over time, you can slowly increase the number of sets that you do for each activity or slowly increase how much you lift.

Choose 6–10 different activities for each session.



The following table describes your resistance physical activity “prescription”.

Resistance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Use light free weights (5–10 lbs.) or resistance bands.
- Do one “set” of an exercise for 10–15 repetitions, such as 10–15 calf raises or knee extensions.
- Aim for:
 - ▶ 6–10 different resistance exercises,
 - ▶ 2–3 sets of *each* exercise per session,
 - ▶ 1–4 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Aim to work at a *moderate intensity* level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ breathing is deeper and faster.
- Your muscles should feel exhausted by the end of the set, that is, you cannot do another repetition.
- *Rest* for
 - ▶ 2–4 minutes before starting a new set or muscle group,
 - ▶ at least 1 day between resistance training sessions.

What resistance physical activities would you like to do?

Balance Physical Activity

Balance is important as you age and can be practiced daily or as often as possible. Balance activities improve your motor skills and coordination, as well as reduce your risk of falling. They can be simple exercises, such as standing on one leg. They can include resistance or flexibility activities that emphasize balance and coordination, such as tai chi, pilates or yoga.

Activities should be challenging, but you should not feel unsafe, like you are about to fall. If you are at risk of falls, use supports, such as a chair or walker while doing the activities.

Examples of seated activities:

- range of motion exercises using arms and legs, such as arm or leg circles,
- coordinated movement of arms and legs.

Examples of standing exercises that can be done with or without hand support:

- standing on one foot,
- standing with feet close together,
- sit-to-stand,
- dynamic movements, such as kicking and catching,
- walking sideways and backwards or walking on or near a line.

Balance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 30 seconds/exercise
- 15–30 minutes per session,
- 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *moderate-intensity* level. This means the activities:

- are challenging,
- require concentration, and
- may require you to hold a chair or wall for support sometimes.

What balance physical activities would you like to do?

Flexibility Physical Activity

Flexibility physical activity improves your range of motion. Daily flexibility activity is the most effective. Do a variety of stretches that target both upper and lower body muscle groups. Include some stretching regularly in your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.

If the stretching activities are too hard, ask an exercise professional how to adapt them to match your level of flexibility.

Flexibility Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 2–4 repetitions of each exercise targeting the major muscles,
- 10 minutes per session,
- 2–4 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Stretch to the point of mild discomfort or tightness (but not pain) and hold the stretch just below this discomfort.
- Build up to holding stretches for 30 seconds.

What flexibility physical activities would you like to do?

Note: A qualified exercise professional can show you what exercises work best for you and how to work at a safe intensity. For example, a physiotherapist can teach you exercises and stretches to do at home to improve posture, strength, flexibility, and endurance. A physical or occupational therapist can help you move more efficiently in your daily living activities (such as bathing and dressing) so that these activities are easier and less tiring. Enrol in a cardiac rehabilitation program near you.

How does physical activity help my chronic heart failure?








Being physically active on a regular basis can give you many benefits.

Mobility

As you become more active, you will notice that you have more energy for activities around the house, hobbies, and other recreational opportunities.

Quality of life

Regular physical activity helps you to:

-  feel less tired,
-  feel less short of breath,
-  sleep better,
-  decrease risk of falls,
-  improve cardiac symptoms,
-  have more energy to do the activities you enjoy, and
-  feel happier.



Regular physical activity helps you to have more energy to do the activities you enjoy.

More benefits

Being physically active on a regular basis can give you many other benefits, such as:

- having more muscle strength and muscle mass when you combine resistance and aerobic training,
- improving your ability to exercise, and
- feeling more confident and in control.

Remember:

- Aerobic and resistance physical activities can help you manage and improve your chronic heart failure.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Set goals that you can reach. If you expect too much, you are likely to get discouraged and stop exercising.
- Use a diary or journal to track your exercise routine and how you are feeling during exercise.
- Keep it fun! Make fun physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do *today* to start being more active?

Topics in this toolkit:

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Chronic heart failure: how to stay safe when active

Aerobic, resistance, balance, and flexibility physical activities are important for those who have chronic heart failure.

- **Aerobic activities** make you breathe a little harder and begin to sweat. Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activities each week, such as brisk walking or swimming.
- **Resistance activities** make you use your muscles to push, pull or lift. Try to do resistance activities 1 to 4 days a week.
- **Balance activities** help to keep you on your feet and reduce your risk of falling. Balance activities should be done 2 to 4 days a week.
- **Flexibility activities** lengthen and stretch muscles that are tight or restrained and can help prevent injuries and muscle and joint pain throughout the body. Flexibility activities should be done 2 to 4 days a week.

This handout for adults gives you information to help you stay safe when you are active.

Safety considerations with chronic heart failure

What is safe for you depends on the severity of your heart failure condition. Even if you can only do a small amount of exercise, it's better than not doing any exercise at all.

Have a checkup before you start an exercise program. Your doctor will likely do an electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG), and maybe an exercise stress test, to see how much activity your heart can safely handle.

Your doctor may recommend a cardiac rehabilitation (a.k.a. rehab) program at a local hospital or clinic. Rehab will give you a supervised exercise program, education, and support to help you build new healthy habits, such as exercise.

Start slowly, exercising for only a few minutes at a comfortable rate. Then each day, slowly increase the length of time and the intensity of your workout.

You can still be physically active, but you will need to follow a few safety steps.

- 1) **Stay cool.** Your medication may make it harder for your body to cool itself when you are active. Here are some tips to keep your body cool.
 - ▶ Stay hydrated. If you are on diuretics, talk with your physician about how much fluid to drink during exercise. Ask how the medication may affect your exercise.
 - ▶ Be active in the morning or evening when it is cooler (if the weather is hot or humid).
 - ▶ Decrease the intensity (i.e., how hard you push yourself) and/or the length of time you are active when the weather or workout location is hot or humid.
- 2) **Exercise indoors when needed.** Avoid exercising outdoors in extreme weather or high humidity. When the weather is very cold, hot or humid, try exercising indoors at a gym or walking at a mall.
- 3) **Avoid sudden stop-and-go exercises.**
- 4) **Do not exercise when your heart failure is not under control.**

When the weather is very cold, hot or humid, try exercising indoors.



5) **Check how you are feeling.** Although regular activity is good for you, you should not be more active when you are not feeling well. Do not exercise or increase your activities when you:

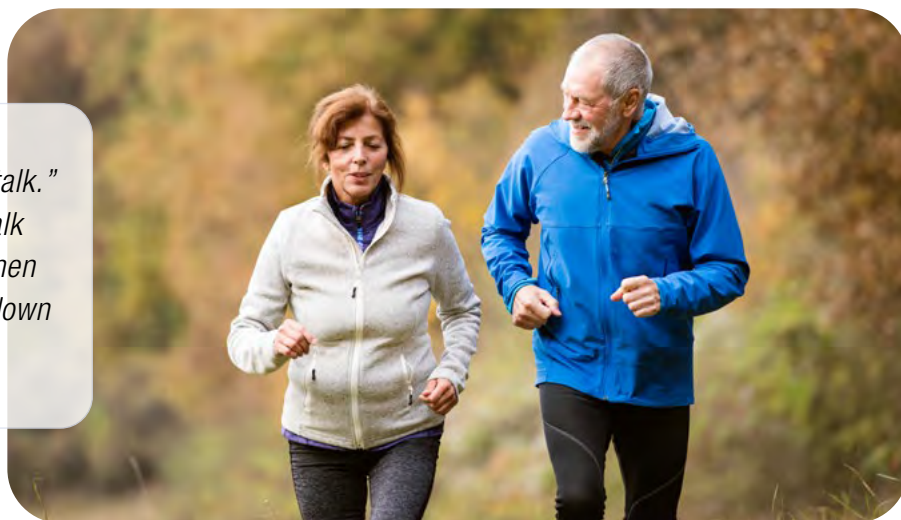
- ▶ have shortness of breath at rest or more symptoms than usual,
- ▶ feel exhausted,
- ▶ have a fever, infection, or feel ill,
- ▶ have chest pain,
- ▶ are going through a major change in your medication, or
- ▶ have persistent muscle aches or pains in the body part you are exercising.

6) **“Walk so you can talk” rule.** It is normal for patients with heart failure to feel short of breath during activity. However, they should have enough breath to carry on a conversation. If you cannot talk while exercising, then you need to slow down or rest. Always listen to your body during exercise. Stop the activity if you feel:

- ▶ short of breath while carrying on a conversation,
- ▶ weak or dizzy,
- ▶ sick to your stomach (nauseated), or
- ▶ discomfort in your chest or your heart is racing.

If you experience any discomfort, stop and rest. Sit in a comfortable chair. If these symptoms persist, call 9-1-1.

*“Walk so you can talk.”
— If you cannot talk
while exercising, then
you need to slow down
or rest.*



General Safety Tips

Here are some general safety tips to keep in mind when you are active.

- Always warm up before exercising and cool down after exercising.
- Listen to your body and take breaks as needed.
- Avoid exercises that cause you to strain, grunt or hold your breath.
- If you have not been active recently, start at a lower physical activity intensity and with shorter sessions.
- Wear your medical alert/ID bracelet.

Remember:

Physical activity can help you manage and improve your chronic heart failure. But make sure you stay safe and have fun when being physically active.

Always warm up before exercising and cool down after exercising.



Topics in this toolkit:

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Physical activity and stroke

Physical activity can help you to manage and improve your symptoms after having a stroke.

People who have suffered a stroke should see a healthcare professional for physical activity advice as early as possible.

How much and what types of physical activity should I do?

To manage and improve your symptoms after having a stroke, try to be active most days of the week.

Both **aerobic** and **resistance** training can help your symptoms following a stroke. **Flexibility** and **balance** activities also give you health benefits.



Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling (stationary bike or arm bike), jogging, and swimming.



Resistance activities strengthen your muscles, such push-ups, bodyweight squats, lifting weights, and aquatic exercises.



Balance and flexibility activities improve your range of motion and stability, reduce your risk of falls, and can prevent injury and strain, such as tai chi, pilates and yoga.

Reduce your daily sedentary (sitting) time and move more, at frequent intervals, throughout the day. Aim for at least 6,000 steps per day. The more activity you do, the better.

Before starting a physical activity program, ask your doctor to screen for any potential risks.

This handout for adults describes:

- how much physical activity you should do, and
- how physical activity can affect your symptoms after a stroke.

Start at a level that is right for you

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active,
- **how often** you are active,
- **how many** activities you do,
- **how hard** you work.

As exercising becomes easier, challenge yourself by increasing the intensity.

Monitor your intensity

Use the “talk test”:

- **low-intensity activity** is when you can talk or sing with ease; you do not experience any shortness of breath.
- **moderate-intensity activity** is when you can talk, but not sing.
- **vigorous-intensity activity** is when you are unable to say more than a few words before you need to pause for a breath.

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.



Aerobic Physical Activity

Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling (stationary bike or arm bike), steppers, treadmills, and swimming.

The following table describes your physical activity “prescription” for aerobic activities.

Aerobic Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Warm up for 3–5 minutes *before* aerobic exercise.
- Aim for *150 minutes of aerobic activity per week*. For example,
 - ▶ 10 minutes, 3 times/day for 5 days,
 - ▶ 30 minutes/day for 5 days, or
 - ▶ 50 minutes/day for 3 days.

You will need to do this for a *minimum of 8 weeks* for your doctor to see a positive effect.

- Cool down for 3-5 minutes *after* aerobic exercise.

HOW HARD?

- Aim for a *moderate- to vigorous-intensity* level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats faster,
 - ▶ your body feels warmer,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ your breathing is deeper,
 - ▶ you can still talk easily, but not sing.

What aerobic activities would you like to do?

Resistance Physical Activity

Resistance activities strengthens your muscles, such as using free weights and resistance bands, or using your own body as resistance (for example, going from sitting to standing, or climbing stairs).

Work all your major muscle groups

It is important to do resistance activities for all of your major muscles.

- Choose 6–10 different activities for each session.
- Start at any duration and intensity and slowly increase them as you feel comfortable.
- Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.
- Alternate between muscle groups to speed up your workout by allowing some muscles to rest while you work others. For example, you can choose a lower body exercise, such as squats, followed by an upper body exercise, such as chest presses.
- If you feel pain or cannot complete your set, the intensity may be too high. Reduce the weight you are using or the number of repetitions you are doing.
- Over time, you can slowly increase the number of sets that you do for each activity or slowly increase how much you lift.

Aim for 6–10 different resistance activities.



The following table describes your resistance physical activity “prescription”.

Resistance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Do one “set” of an exercise for 10-15 repetitions, such as 10-15 bicep curls.
- Aim for:
 - ▶ 6–10 different resistance exercises,
 - ▶ 2–3 sets of *each* exercise per session,
 - ▶ 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Aim to work at a *low- to moderate-intensity* level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ breathing is deeper and faster.
- Your muscles should feel exhausted by the end of the set, that is, you cannot do another repetition.
- *Rest* for
 - ▶ 2–4 minutes before starting a new set or muscle group,
 - ▶ at least 1 day between resistance training sessions.

What resistance physical activities would you like to do?

Balance Physical Activity

Balance is important as you age and can be practiced daily or as often as possible. Balance activities improve your motor skills and coordination, as well as reduce your risk of falling. They can be simple exercises, such as standing on one leg. They can include resistance or flexibility activities that emphasize balance and coordination, such as tai chi, pilates or yoga.

Activities should be challenging, but you should not feel unsafe, like you are about to fall. If you are at risk of falls, use supports, such as a chair or walker while doing the activities.

Examples of seated activities:

- range of motion exercises using arms and legs, such as arm or leg circles,
- coordinated movement of arms and legs.

Examples of standing exercises that can be done with or without hand support:

- standing on one foot,
- standing with feet close together,
- sit-to-stand,
- dynamic movements, such as kicking and catching,
- walking sideways and backwards or walking on or near a line.

Balance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 30 seconds/exercise
- 15–30 minutes per session,
- 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *moderate-intensity* level. This means the activities:

- are challenging,
- require concentration, and
- may require you to hold a chair or wall for support sometimes.

What balance physical activities would you like to do?

Flexibility Physical Activity

Flexibility physical activity improves your range of motion. Daily flexibility activity is the most effective. Do a variety of stretches that target both upper and lower body muscle groups. Include some stretching regularly in your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.

If the stretching activities are too hard, ask an exercise professional how to adapt them to match your level of flexibility.

Flexibility Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 2–4 repetitions of each exercise targeting the major muscles,
- 10–15 minutes per session,
- 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Stretch to the point of mild discomfort or tightness (but not pain) and hold the stretch.
- Build up to holding stretches for 30 seconds.

What flexibility physical activities would you like to do?

Note: A qualified exercise professional can show you what exercises work best for you, how to modify exercises if you are weak on one side, and how to work at a safe intensity.

If you have a cardiovascular disease, such as high blood pressure, an exercise stress test can show what intensity level your physical activity program should be. A stress test shows your heart rate, blood pressure, and how hard you are working.

How does physical activity help my symptoms after a stroke?

Being physically active has many benefits for your health. It can strengthen your muscles, improve your endurance, and improve your balance. In the long term, physical activity can help overcome some of the challenges that you may have in your day-to-day activities due to your stroke. Being physically active can also reduce your chances of having another stroke.

Blood pressure

When you are active, your blood pressure changes.

- The top number (called systolic) will rise when you are active. The harder you work, the higher this number can go.
- The bottom number (called diastolic) will stay about the same. In some people, it may drop slightly. This is normal.
- If your blood pressure is high, your healthcare provider may tell you to monitor your blood pressure when you are active. They can also show you a blood pressure range to stay within, so you can stay safe when active.



Being physically active can reduce your chances of having another stroke.






Over time, physical activity can help improve your blood pressure and your cholesterol levels.

Mobility

Physical activity improves your muscle strength and endurance, which will improve your ability to move, such as being able to walk faster or greater distances before needing to rest. At the same time, you can expect to see improvements in your balance and confidence in performing daily tasks.

More benefits

Being physically active on a regular basis can give you many other benefits, such as:

-  improving how well your heart works,
-  improving how well you sleep,
-  improving your mood and mental health,
-  boosting your energy and strength, and
-  giving you more control over your body weight.

Remember:

- Aerobic and resistance physical activities can help you manage and improve your symptoms after a stroke.
- Being physically active can also reduce your chances of having another stroke.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Keep it fun! Make physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do *today* to start being more active?

Topics in this toolkit:

- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
- B. Making a physical activity plan
- C. Setting goals for physical activity
- D. What stops you from being physically active?
- E. Benefits of physical activity
- F. Physical activity and your blood pressure
- G. High blood pressure safety
- H. Physical activity and Type 2 diabetes
- I. Diabetes safety
- J. Healthy weight and physical activity
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Stroke: how to stay safe when active



Aerobic, resistance, balance, and flexibility physical activities can help improve your symptoms after having a stroke.

- **Aerobic activities** make you breathe a little harder and begin to sweat. Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activities each week, such as walking or cycling. Before starting aerobic training, ask your doctor if there are any medical conditions that require special consideration when exercising.
- **Resistance activities** make you use your muscles to push, pull or lift. Try to do resistance activities 2 to 3 days a week.
- **Balance activities** help to keep you on your feet and reduce your risk of falling. Balance activities should be done 2 to 3 days a week.
- **Flexibility activities** lengthen and stretch muscles that are tight or restrained. They can help prevent injuries and muscle and joint pain throughout the body. Flexibility activities should be done 2 to 3 days a week.

This handout for adults gives you information to help you stay safe when you are active.

Medications and your safety

Are you on medication for your blood pressure, such as a diuretic, beta blocker or similar medication? Check with your healthcare provider to find out.

You can still be physically active, but you will need to follow a few safety steps.

- 1) Be sure to discuss your medications with your doctor before starting your physical activity program.
 - ▶ Some medications may raise or lower your heart rate and blood pressure when you are at rest or when exercising.
 - ▶ Patients on Warfarin medication to prevent blood clots may have a higher risk of bleeding if they are bruised.

Topics include:

- medication,
- blood pressure awareness, and
- general safety tips for physical activity.

- 2) Your medication may affect your blood sugar levels. This may make you feel a bit light-headed. If you feel light-headed or dizzy:
- ▶ stop your activity, or slow down,
 - ▶ take a glucose tablet, or eat a piece of candy, and
 - ▶ do not resume your activity until you feel well.
- 3) Stay cool. Your medication may make it harder for your body to cool itself when you are active. Keep your body cool by:
- ▶ drinking lots of water while being active,
 - ▶ being active in the morning or evening when it is cooler (if the weather is hot or humid), and
 - ▶ decreasing the intensity (how hard you push yourself) and/or the length of time you are active when the weather or workout location is hot or humid.

Blood pressure while you exercise

Before participating in a physical activity.

Work with your doctor to determine your safe blood pressure limits during any exercise. Check your blood pressure before you begin your physical activity to ensure that it is within a safe range.



When the weather is very cold, hot or humid, try exercising indoors.

During physical activity, your blood pressure will change.

- The top number (called systolic) will rise when you are active. The harder you work, the higher this number can go.
- The bottom number (called diastolic) will stay about the same. In some people, it may drop slightly. This is normal.
- If the systolic blood pressure lowers or remains the same during exercise, **STOP** exercising and contact your physician or healthcare provider.
- If your blood pressure is too high, your healthcare provider may
 - ▶ tell you to monitor your blood pressure when you are active, or
 - ▶ give you blood pressure ranges, so you can stay safe when active.



Check your blood pressure before you begin your physical activity to ensure that it is within a safe range.

Your blood pressure may be lower *after* you have done an aerobic physical activity.

- This decrease in your blood pressure can last several hours. This is one of the reasons why daily physical activity is recommended; you get health benefits right away!
- Often, those with high blood pressure will see the greatest change.
- You may see a larger decrease if your physical activity session is longer, or if you work harder.

What is your current blood pressure?

What is your ideal blood pressure?

Blood pressure changes OVER TIME

Over time, regular physical activity and a healthy diet may help you reach a healthy blood pressure level.

If you have trouble maintaining a stable blood pressure, talk with your physician before continuing any physical activity program.

Other safety considerations after having a stroke

- Be sure to discuss your physical activity plan with a healthcare professional to ensure that there are no conditions that would interfere with your participation in a program. In your plan, discuss how much, how often and how hard you should exercise to reduce your chances of fatigue and/or injury.
- Start with light physical activity for the first few weeks in your program and only increase the load or repetitions if muscle soreness or fatigue no longer occur.
- If you are at risk of falling, consider using a device to support you during your activities. For example, use a harness when you are on a treadmill; or hold onto a chair when you are doing balance or stretching activities. Be sure to pick activities that are safe and fun for you!
- Pay attention to your body and know the signs. Regularly check your heart rate and blood pressure during exercise. If you have any of the following symptoms, stop your physical activity and ask your doctor before starting again:
 - ▶ Light-headedness or dizziness
 - ▶ Cold or clammy skin
 - ▶ Excessive thirst
 - ▶ Nausea, vomiting or severe headache
 - ▶ Chest heaviness, pain, or tightness; angina
 - ▶ Pain or discomfort towards the jaw or arm
 - ▶ Heart palpitations (racing, pounding, or fluttering)
 - ▶ Seizures
 - ▶ Trembling
 - ▶ Irritability, nervousness, confusion
 - ▶ Sudden shortness of breath not due to increased activity
 - ▶ Excessive sweating
 - ▶ Discomfort or stiffness in muscles and joints persisting for several days after exercising

General Safety Tips

Here are some general safety tips to keep in mind when you are active.

- Always warm-up and cool-down.
- Listen to your body and take breaks as needed.
- Drink water before, during and after physical activity.
- Wear your medical alert/ID bracelet.

Remember:

Physical activity can help you manage and improve your symptoms after having a stroke. It may also help prevent a second stroke.

But make sure you stay safe and have fun when being physically active.



Start with light physical activity for the first few weeks, and only increase the load or repetitions if muscle soreness or fatigue no longer occur.

Topics in this toolkit:

- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
- B. Making a physical activity plan
- C. Setting goals for physical activity
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Physical activity and Parkinson's Disease

Physical activity can help you to manage and improve your Parkinson's Disease.

How much physical activity should I do?

To manage and improve your symptoms of Parkinson's Disease, try to be active most days of the week.

Aerobic, resistance, flexibility, and balance activities training can help improve your symptoms of Parkinson's Disease.



Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, dancing, swimming, and water aerobics.



Resistance activities strengthen your muscles, such as resistance bands, free weights, gardening, and sit-to-stand exercises. Even small weights can improve strength, like lifting soup cans.



Balance and flexibility activities can improve your range of motion and stability, reduce your risk of falls, and prevent injury and strain, such as tai chi, pilates and yoga.

Start at a level that is right for you

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active,
- **how often** you are active,
- **how many** activities you do,
- **how hard** you work.

This handout for adults describes:

- how much physical activity you should do, and
- how physical activity can affect your symptoms of Parkinson's Disease.



As exercising becomes easier, challenge yourself by increasing the intensity.

Monitor your intensity

Use the “talk test”:

- **low-intensity activity** is when you can talk or sing with ease; you do not experience any shortness of breath.
- **moderate-intensity activity** is when you can talk, but not sing.
- **vigorous-intensity activity** is when you are unable to say more than a few words before you need to pause for a breath.

Examples of low- to moderate-intensity activities are walking at different speeds, gardening, swimming, and cycling.

Examples of moderate- to vigorous-intensity activities are brisk walking, jogging, and cycling.

Aerobic Physical Activity

Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, dancing, swimming, and water aerobics.

The following table describes your physical activity “prescription” for aerobic activities.

As exercising becomes easier, challenge yourself by increasing the intensity.



Aerobic Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Warm up for 3–5 minutes *before* aerobic exercise.
- Aim for *150 minutes of aerobic activity per week*. For example,
 - ▶ 10 minutes, 3 times/day for 5 days,
 - ▶ 30 minutes/day for 5 days, or
 - ▶ 50 minutes/day for 3 days.
- Cool down for 3-5 minutes *after* aerobic exercise.

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *low- to moderate-intensity* level.

Low- to moderate-intensity activity means:

- ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
- ▶ you are sweating lightly,
- ▶ your breathing is deeper and faster,
- ▶ you can talk or sing easily.

What aerobic activities would you like to do?

Resistance Physical Activity

Resistance activities strengthen your muscles, such as using free weights and resistance bands, or using your own body as resistance (for example, going from sitting to standing, or climbing stairs).

Work all your major muscle groups

It is important to do resistance activities for all of your major muscles.

- Choose 6–10 different activities for each session.
- Start at any duration and intensity, and slowly increase them as you feel comfortable.
- Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.
- Alternate between muscle groups to speed up your workout by allowing some muscles to rest while you work others. For example, you can choose a lower body exercise, such as squats, followed by an upper body exercise, such as chest presses.
- If you feel pain or cannot complete your set, the intensity may be too high. Reduce the weight you are using or the number of repetitions you are doing.
- Over time, you can slowly increase the number of sets that you do for each activity or slowly increase how much you lift.

Start at any duration and intensity, and slowly increase them as you feel comfortable.



The following table describes your resistance physical activity “prescription”.

Resistance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Do one “set” of an exercise for 10-15 repetitions, such as 10-15 bicep curls.
- Aim for:
 - ▶ 6–10 different resistance exercises,
 - ▶ 2–3 sets of *each* exercise per session,
 - ▶ 20–40 minutes per session,
 - ▶ 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Aim to work at a *moderate-intensity* level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ breathing is deeper and faster.
- Your muscles should feel exhausted by the end of the set, that is, you cannot do another repetition.
- *Rest* for
 - ▶ 2–4 minutes before starting a new set or muscle group,
 - ▶ at least 1 day between resistance training sessions.

What resistance physical activities would you like to do?

Balance Physical Activity

Balance is important as you age and can be practiced daily or as often as possible. Balance activities improve your motor skills and coordination, as well as reduce your risk of falling. They can be simple exercises, such as standing on one leg. They can include resistance or flexibility activities that emphasize balance and coordination, such as tai chi, pilates or yoga.

Activities should be challenging, but you should not feel unsafe, like you are about to fall. If you are at risk of falls, use supports, such as a chair or walker while doing the activities.

Practice doing *two activities at the same time*, such as walking for two minutes while holding a conversation with another person, naming objects, or subtracting a random number by 3. The primary focus is on your balance while walking. Stop if you notice your balance or walking pattern changes.

Balance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 30 seconds of holding your balance
- 15 minutes per session,
- 5 days per week.

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *moderate-intensity* level. This means the activities:

- are challenging,
- require concentration, and
- may require you to hold a chair or wall for support sometimes.

What balance physical activities would you like to do?

Flexibility Physical Activity

Flexibility physical activity improves your range of motion. Daily flexibility activity is the most effective. Do a variety of stretches that target both upper and lower body muscle groups. Include some stretching regularly in your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.

If the stretching activities are too hard, ask an exercise professional how to adapt them to match your level of flexibility.

Flexibility Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 2–4 repetitions of each exercise targeting the major muscles,
- 10–15 minutes per session,
- 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Stretch to the point of mild discomfort or tightness (but not pain) and hold the stretch.
- Build up to holding stretches for 30 seconds.

What flexibility physical activities would you like to do?

Note: A qualified exercise professional can show you what exercises work best for you and how to work at a safe intensity. For example, a physiotherapist can teach you exercises and stretches to do at home to improve posture, strength, flexibility, and endurance. A physical or occupational therapist can help you move more efficiently in your daily living activities (such as bathing and dressing) so that these activities are easier and less tiring.

How does physical activity help my symptoms of Parkinson's Disease?

Being physically active has many benefits for your health. It can strengthen your muscles, and improve your endurance, balance, mobility, walking distance and speed, step length, and postural stability. Physical activity can also lessen the impact of Parkinson's Disease symptoms, such as tremors, imbalance, and stiffness.

Short-term

- improve balance and walking coordination, and
- improve your endurance to participate in daily activities.

Long-term

- decrease the risk of falling, and
- minimize the impact of the symptoms of Parkinson's Disease on your daily life.

Heart Rate









When you are doing an aerobic activity, your heart rate will increase. Be sure to ask your doctor about a healthy heart rate range for you before beginning. Keep in mind that exercises may be hard when you start, but they will get easier as you continue to do them.

Physical activity can improve your endurance, balance, mobility, walking distance and speed, step length, and postural stability.



More benefits

Being physically active on a regular basis can give you many other benefits, such as:

-  improving your quality of life,
-  improving how well you sleep,
-  improving your mental health, including your ability to think, focus and retain information,
-  reducing your risk of falling,
-  improving your mood,
-  boosting your energy.

Remember:

- A combination of aerobic, resistance, balance, and flexibility activities can help you manage and improve your symptoms of Parkinson's Disease.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Keep it fun! Make physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do *today* to start being more active?

Topics in this toolkit:

- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
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Parkinson's Disease: how to stay safe when active

Aerobic, resistance, balance, and flexibility physical activities are important for those who have Parkinson's Disease.

- **Aerobic activities** make you breathe a little harder and begin to sweat. Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activities each week, such as brisk walking or cycling.
- **Resistance activities** make you use your muscles to push, pull or lift. Try to do resistance activities 2 to 3 times a week.
- **Balance activities** help to keep you on your feet and reduce your risk of falling. Balance activities should be done most days in a week.
- **Flexibility activities** lengthen and stretch muscles that are tight or restrained. They can help prevent injuries and muscle and joint pain throughout the body. Flexibility activities should be done most days in a week.

Medications and your safety

Check with your healthcare provider before starting any physical activity program to ensure it is safe for you.

- Some medications may raise or lower your heart rate and blood pressure when you are at rest or when exercising. Be sure to discuss your medications with your doctor before starting your physical activity program.
- Take your Parkinson's medication on time for maximum mobility.
- To get the most benefit, people with Parkinson's disease should exercise when they are at their best in their medication cycles or in an "on" state.
- Start your exercise about 45–60 minutes after you have taken your medication.

This handout for adults gives you information to help you stay safe when you are active.

Topics include:

- medication, and
- general safety tips for physical activity.

- Regularly check your heart rate and blood pressure during exercise. Also watch for symptoms such as dizziness, giddiness, nausea, pain, or excessive sweating.
- Some medications may lower your blood pressure particularly when changing positions, for example, from lying to standing. Be sure to change positions slowly to avoid dizziness, falling, or fainting.
- It may take some time for you to notice the benefits of exercising. Don't be discouraged! The benefits may depend on consistently exercising at the same period of time after taking your medication.
- Be extra careful when exercising after a change in medication type or amount since it may affect you differently.

Other safety tips with Parkinson's Disease

- Balance, flexibility, and range of motion training are important for people with Parkinson's Disease.
- Starting exercise as early as possible can limit the degree of disability and reduce Parkinson's Disease symptoms.
- If you have advanced Parkinson's Disease, use a recumbent (reclining with back support) bike, a stationary bike, or an arm ergometer as a safer option for aerobic training.
- Monitor fatigue both during and after activities. At the end, you should feel tired, but not exhausted.

Balance, flexibility, and range of motion training are important for people with Parkinson's Disease.



General Safety Tips

Here are some general safety tips to keep in mind when you are active.

- Always warm-up and cool-down.
- Listen to your body and take breaks as needed.
- Drink water before, during and after physical activity.
- Choose activities that are safe for you to do.
- Start at an intensity level that you are comfortable with.
- Exercise in a way that is safe for you, for example, with balance exercises, you may need a stable support nearby; or when using a cycle ergometer or treadmill, you may need a safety harness.
- Join an exercise class. One of the best ways to stay motivated is to exercise with others. Contact your regional Parkinson Society for programs that may be available in your community.
- Wear your medical alert/ID bracelet.

Remember:

Physical activity can help you manage your Parkinson's Disease symptoms and help you improve in your daily activities.

But make sure you stay safe and have fun when being physically active.

One of the best ways to stay motivated is to exercise with others.



Topics in this toolkit:

- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
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Physical activity and dementia

Physical activity can help you to manage symptoms of dementia.

How much physical activity should I do?

To manage and improve your symptoms of dementia, try to sit less and move more on most days of the week.

Aerobic, **resistance**, **flexibility**, and **balance** activities training can help improve your symptoms of dementia.



Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, cross-country skiing, and swimming.



Resistance activities strengthen your muscles, such as push-ups, squats, lifting weights, and aquatic exercises.



Balance and flexibility activities can improve your range of motion and stability, reduce your risk of falls, and prevent injury and strain, such as tai chi, pilates and yoga.

Start at a level that is right for you

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active,
- **how often** you are active,
- **how many** activities you do,
- **how hard** you work.

This handout for adults describes:

- how much physical activity you should do, and
- how physical activity can help you manage the symptoms of dementia.

As exercising becomes easier, challenge yourself by increasing the intensity.

Monitor your intensity

Use the “talk test”:

- **low-intensity activity** is when you can talk or sing with ease; you do not experience any shortness of breath.
- **moderate-intensity activity** is when you can talk, but not sing.
- **vigorous-intensity activity** is when you are unable to say more than a few words before you need to pause for a breath.

Examples of low- to moderate-intensity activities are walking at different speeds, gardening, swimming, and cycling.

Examples of moderate- to vigorous-intensity activities are brisk walking, jogging, and cycling.

Aerobic Physical Activity

Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, cross-country skiing, and swimming.

The following table describes your physical activity “prescription” for aerobic activities.

Use the “talk test”. Moderate-intensity activity is when you can talk, but not sing.



Aerobic Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Warm up for 3–5 minutes *before* aerobic exercise.
- Aim for *150 minutes of aerobic activity per week*.
For example,
 - ▶ 10 minutes, 3 times/day for 5 days,
 - ▶ 30 minutes/day for 5 days, or
 - ▶ 50 minutes/day for 3 days.
- Cool down for 3–5 minutes *after* aerobic exercise.

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *moderate- to vigorous-intensity* level.

Moderate- to vigorous-intensity activity means:

- ▶ your heart beats faster,
- ▶ you are sweating lightly,
- ▶ breathing is deeper and faster,
- ▶ you can still talk easily, but not sing.

For those with advanced stage dementia or physical limitations, low- to moderate-intensity exercise may be more appropriate. You can begin with seated exercises and progress to modified standing exercises, such as holding onto a stable surface. An exercise specialist can help guide you.

What aerobic activities would you like to do?

Resistance Physical Activity

Resistance activities help to strengthen your muscles, such as push-ups, squats, lifting weights, and aquatic exercises.

Work all your major muscle groups

It is important to do resistance activities for all of your major muscles.

- Choose 6–10 different activities for each session.
- Start at any duration and intensity and slowly increase them as you feel comfortable.
- Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.
- Alternate between muscle groups to speed up your workout by allowing some muscles to rest while you work others. For example, you can choose a lower body exercise, such as squats, followed by an upper body exercise, such as chest presses.
- If you feel pain or cannot complete your set, the intensity may be too high. Reduce the weight you are using or the number of repetitions you are doing.
- Over time, you can slowly increase the number of sets that you do for each activity or slowly increase how much you lift.

Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.



The following table describes your resistance physical activity “prescription”.

Resistance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Do one “set” of an exercise for 10–15 repetitions, such as 10–15 bicep curls.
- Aim for:
 - ▶ 6–10 different resistance exercises,
 - ▶ 1–3 sets of *each* exercise per session,
 - ▶ 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Aim to work at a *moderate-intensity* level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ breathing is deeper and faster.
- Your muscles should feel exhausted by the end of the set, that is, you cannot do another repetition.
- *Rest* for
 - ▶ 2–4 minutes before starting a new set or muscle group,
 - ▶ at least 1 day between resistance training sessions.

What resistance physical activities would you like to do?

Balance Physical Activity

Balance is important as you age and can be practiced daily or as often as possible. Balance activities improve your motor skills and coordination, as well as reduce your risk of falling. They can be simple exercises, such as standing on one leg. They can include resistance or flexibility activities that emphasize balance and coordination, such as tai chi, pilates or yoga.

Activities should be challenging, but you should not feel unsafe, like you are about to fall. Use supports, such as a chair or walker, if you are at risk of falls while doing the activities.

Examples of seated activities:

- range of motion exercises using arms and legs, such as arm or leg circles,
- coordinated movement of arms and legs.

Examples of standing exercises that can be done with or without hand support:

- standing on one foot,
- standing with feet close together,
- sit-to-stand,
- dynamic movements, such as kicking and catching,
- walking sideways and backwards or walking on or near a line.

Balance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 30 seconds of holding your balance
- 15-30 minutes per session,
- 2-3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *moderate-intensity* level. This means the activities:

- are challenging,
- require concentration, and
- may require you to hold a chair or wall for support sometimes.

What balance physical activities would you like to do?

Flexibility Physical Activity

Flexibility physical activity improves your range of motion. Daily flexibility activity is the most effective. Do a variety of stretches that target both upper and lower body muscle groups. Include some stretching regularly in your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.

If the stretching activities are too hard, ask an exercise professional how to adapt them to match your level of flexibility.

Flexibility Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 2–4 repetitions of each exercise targeting the major muscles,
- 10–15 minutes per session,
- 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Stretch to the point of mild discomfort or tightness (but not pain) and hold the stretch.
- Build up to holding stretches for 30 seconds.

What flexibility physical activities would you like to do?

Note: A qualified exercise professional can show you what exercises work best for you and how to work at a safe intensity. Try to find facilities and physical activity professionals who have worked with individuals who have dementia.

How does physical activity help my dementia?

Being physically active has many benefits for your health. It can strengthen your muscles, improve your mobility and improve your ability to perform activities of daily living, which can help you to maintain your independence. Exercise can also improve your balance, which could reduce your risk of having a fall.









Physical activity can also help with your mental health such as attention, memory, thinking, decision-making, and problem solving, and it can potentially slow down the amount of mental health decline.



It is easier to maintain than to regain function—the sooner you can begin the better!

More benefits

Being physically active on a regular basis can give you many other benefits, such as:

-  improving how well you sleep,
-  improving your mood,
-  improving your confidence and self-esteem,
-  boosting your energy,
-  improving your heart health,
-  reducing your risk of certain conditions, such as stroke, which can affect your mental health,
-  reducing your risk of osteoporosis or bone loss,
-  giving you chances to meet with old friends and make new friends.



Physical activity can improve your ability to perform activities of daily living.

Remember:

- A combination of aerobic, resistance, balance, and flexibility activities can help you manage the symptoms of dementia.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Keep it fun! Make physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do *today* to start being more active?

A combination of aerobic, resistance, balance, and flexibility activities can help you manage the symptoms of dementia.



Topics in this toolkit:

- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
- B. Making a physical activity plan
- C. Setting goals for physical activity
- D. What stops you from being physically active?
- E. Benefits of physical activity
- F. Physical activity and your blood pressure
- G. High blood pressure safety
- H. Physical activity and Type 2 diabetes
- I. Diabetes safety
- J. Healthy weight and physical activity
- K. Physical activity and anxiety
- L. Anxiety safety
- M. Physical activity and chronic heart failure
- N. Chronic heart failure safety
- O. Physical activity and stroke
- P. Stroke safety
- Q. Physical activity and Parkinson's Disease
- R. Parkinson's Disease safety
- S. Physical activity and dementia
- T. Dementia safety

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Dementia: how to stay safe when active

A combination of aerobic, resistance, balance, and flexibility physical activities are important for those who have dementia.

- **Aerobic activities** make you breathe a little harder and begin to sweat. Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activities each week, such as brisk walking or swimming.
- **Resistance activities** make you use your muscles to push, pull or lift. Try to do resistance activities 2 to 3 days a week.
- **Balance activities** help to keep you on your feet and reduce your risk of falling. Balance activities should be done 2 to 3 days a week.
- **Flexibility activities** lengthen and stretch muscles that are tight or restrained. They can help prevent injuries and muscle and joint pain throughout the body. Flexibility activities should be done 2 to 3 days a week.

Medications and your safety

If you are taking any medications for dementia or another condition, talk with your doctor about possible side effects and how they may affect your ability to be physically active.

- Acetylcholine inhibitors and Memantine are commonly used to manage the mental symptoms of dementia.
- Anti-depressants, anti-psychotics and anti-anxiety medications are also commonly prescribed to manage behavioural symptoms of dementia.
- These medications should not prevent you from being physically active, but they may cause the following side effects:
 - ▶ dizziness
 - ▶ loss of coordination
 - ▶ drowsiness
 - ▶ fatigue

This handout for adults gives you information to help you stay safe when you are active.

Topics include:

- medication,
- safety and other considerations for dementia, and
- general safety tips for physical activity.

- The side effects may impact balance and stability while active, especially for individuals who are very inactive or frail. If you feel any of these side effects, stop your exercise, and speak to your healthcare provider.
- If balance and coordination are a concern, read the tips below on how to lower your risk of falls and injuries.

Other safety tips for being active with dementia

You should get medical approval before starting a physical activity program. Your healthcare provider can use the [Get Active Questionnaire](#), a simple checklist to see if you are ready for a moderate-intensity physical activity program: <https://tinyurl.com/activequestionnaire>.

Tell your doctor if you also have arthritis, bone or joint problems, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, balance or coordination issues, or any other condition, as they may affect your exercise program.

Worried about wandering and confusion during physical activities?

If you are concerned about getting lost, consider wearing a medical alert bracelet, GPS tracker and/or a piece of identification.

For outdoor physical activities, you may feel safer being with a close friend or joining a walking or running group. You can also carry your cell phone, to help you feel safe and keep in touch with family, friends, and caregivers when you are outdoors.

When choosing a facility or exercise program, ask if there are professionals who have experience working with dementia and who can support you. An exercise professional can help you find your way around the facility and can provide direction and cues during activity. Exercise instructions with figures or numbers at exercise stations are also helpful.

If you are swimming, wear a lifejacket or flotation belt and be sure that a lifeguard is present.



Don't give up! Start small and build slowly.

Worried about falls or other injuries?

People with dementia can have balance and coordination issues and are at a higher risk of falls. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to reduce your risk.

- If you have balance or coordination issues, use a cane, a walker, or other mobility aids. See a physiotherapist to help with these concerns.
- When doing balance activities, keep yourself near a wall, rail, chair, or other type of support to help you maintain your balance.
- For aerobic activities, use of a recumbent (reclining with back support) bicycle, rowing machine, or other seated activities will reduce your chance of falling. Swimming or water aerobics are also safe options.
- When it comes to resistance activities, resistance machines or bands may be safer than free weights if you have coordination issues. If falls are a concern, seated resistance exercises may be preferable.

Seek help from a physiotherapist, occupational therapist, or exercise physiologist if you have had or are at risk of a fall.

Other issues to think about

- **Exercise in the morning.** You may notice that you experience greater restlessness, agitation, and fatigue in the evening hours (this is known as sundowning). Many people with dementia find it easier to be active during the morning hours. Consider scheduling your workouts in the morning to get the best results.
- **Calm and familiar environments may be best.** Research suggests that normal lighting, moderate sound, and a small number of people may be best for individuals with dementia. Familiar and soothing music may help to lower tension or distress. If crowded gyms and loud music make you uneasy or make it difficult to focus, avoid them.

Many people with dementia find it easier to be active during the morning hours.



- **Don't give up.** Staying motivated can be difficult for anyone. This may be especially true if you have dementia. Keep goals achievable (see Resource C: Setting goals for physical activity). Start small and build slowly!
- **Bring a buddy.** Get family and friends involved to help keep you motivated. Being active with your caregiver or friend will provide both of you with benefits to your health and well-being.
- **Connect with others.** Joining an exercise group or class can be a great way to stay motivated and keep you connected with your community. Contact the local Alzheimer's society to see if there are any programs specific to dementia in your area. Programs like [Minds in Motion](#) provide physical activity and support from others with shared experiences: <https://alzheimer.ca/en/on/We-can-help/Minds-In-Motion/What-is-Minds-in-Motion>.



Bring a buddy.

General Safety Tips

Here are some general safety tips to keep in mind when you are active.

- Always warm-up and cool-down.
- Listen to your body and take breaks as needed.
- Drink water before, during and after physical activity.
- As your dementia progresses, check-in regularly with your healthcare provider to ensure that your physical activity program meets your current needs.

Remember:

Physical activity can help you manage your symptoms of dementia.

But make sure you stay safe and have fun when being physically active.

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