

Must Know Health Info

Health Information from the Experts at Johns Hopkins Medicine



Exercise in Disguise!

Easy, low-cost ways to stay active each day

You may know that it is important to exercise. It helps you control your diabetes. It helps you control blood glucose levels. It helps you lose weight and stay healthy. What you might not know is that you don't have to join a gym to get these benefits!

A study looked at women who walked for exercise. It compared them to women who did hard exercise. Just walking had the same health benefits as a hard workout. And, you can benefit from walking a little bit at a time. It can be just as good as structured exercise sessions. What matters most is how much total exercise you get each day. (Read on for the guidelines.)

If you are not active, talk with your doctor. Your doctor will tell you if there are things you should avoid. He may want you to avoid some exercises or not work out as hard. Exercise will cause your blood sugar to drop. Here are some tips to keep your blood sugar in check when you exercise.

- Test your blood sugar before you get started.
- Know how working out affects your blood sugar.
- Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated.

There are so many ways to get and stay active. Once you get started, you will start to see them all around you.

No gym or fancy equipment needed

You really don't need to use fancy gear at a health club to get healthy. There are lots of simple ways to do that.

Type of Exercise	How it Helps You	Examples
Cardiovascular Exercise	Raises your heart rate	Walking, biking, swimming, light yard work
Strength Training	Increases bone and muscle mass	Lifting, pulling, or pushing heavy objects
Stretching Activities	Increases flexibility	Yoga, working with an exercise ball

If you work out harder you will become fit and burn more calories.

Of course, it's okay to spend an hour at the gym three times a week. But you don't have to go to the gym to get healthy. You can just change the way you do everyday things. Going to the gym can take a lot of time. You don't have to spend an entire hour working out to change your lifestyle. It's just as good to be active throughout the day. You can walk up and down the stairs for a total of 30 minutes each day. If you can't do it all at once, you can do it in 10-minute chunks. This is just as good as spending 30 minutes on a stair machine.

Exercising at home

You can also change your lifestyle by working out at home. It may be hard to get to the gym or it may cost too much. Watch an exercise show on TV. Rent or buy exercise DVDs to work out in your own home. Your body can't tell if you are doing jumping jacks at home or at the gym.

You also don't need costly weights to make your muscles strong. You can go for a walk. You can sit and lift household items (cans of food work well) as weights. You can do push-ups or sit-ups. These things do not cost a lot and are easy to do. They are good ways to lower your blood sugar.

Many of these ideas also work well when you are away from home. They work well if you don't have access to exercise gear.

Everyday activities

The things you do around the house help you burn calories, too. Does your kitchen floor need mopping? Isn't it time you cleaned out your attic? Have you worked in the garden lately? These things can burn more than 200

calories an hour. This can help you lose extra weight and keep your blood sugar in check. (Read "[Exercise Facts -- Cardiovascular Activity](#)" for more ideas on exercises and everyday activities and the calories you burn per minute when you do them.)

Look for opportunities

There are a lot of ways to stay active right near home. Try doing these things instead of using your car:

- Walk to the grocery store.
- Take the bus or train to the movies.
- Walk with your child to or from school.
- Walk to a friend's house.
- Walk your dog the long way around the neighborhood—he'll love it, too!

And here are ways to stay active at work:

- Park in a spot far from your office for a longer walk to your desk.
- Skip the elevator and take the stairs.
- Pass on the coffee and take a walk around the building to de-stress. Grab lunch at a place that's a little farther away. Walk to a nearby park or bench with your healthy bag lunch.

When it comes to staying active, a little bit at a time can go a long way. Even a little bit can help you get healthy. Look all around. An active life is easier than you think!

Top tips for staying active outside the gym:

1. Stay active all day long. The CDC suggests this: try bouts of at least 10 minutes at a time; do this for a total of at least 30 minutes per day.
2. Skip the elevator and walk up the stairs.
3. Play music and dance your heart away.
4. Don't take your usual seat on the couch or an easy chair. Stretch out on the floor and do simple exercises while you watch TV.
5. Exercise to DVDs or TV shows.

How much should you exercise?

Follow these tips from the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This advice will help you get the most out of exercise. Talk to your doctor to make sure this advice is right for you.

- **Aim for at least 30 minutes most days.** Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, above usual activity, at work or home on most days of the week.
- **Lose weight with 60 minutes most days.** Lose weight by engaging in 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity activity on most days of the week while staying within your calorie intake requirements.
- **Sustain weight loss with 60-90 minutes daily.** Engage in daily moderate-intensity physical activity while staying within your calorie intake requirements. Check with your doctor before participating in this level of activity.
- **Vary your activity.** Include cardiovascular conditioning for your heart, stretching exercises for flexibility, and resistance exercises or calisthenics for muscle strength and endurance.

*****Authored by Johns Hopkins University and Johns Hopkins Health System*****