

Starting an Exercise Program

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So you've decided to get started on an exercise program in earnest – but how? Below we outline simple principles that will give the novice exerciser--from teenagers to senior citizens--safe ideas for how to get moving, including a few basic stretches, some strength exercises you can do in the safety of your own home requiring little more than light hand weights and a mat, and cardiovascular recommendations.

GETTING STARTED

When embarking on any strenuous exercise program, if you have not participated in one before, you may want to get a physical so you have medical clearance to do so. This is especially important if you have a family history of heart problems, diabetes, or asthma, if you are over the age of 55, or if you are severely overweight. If you are otherwise healthy and without pain or discomfort, this program is gentle enough for just about anyone to start it, but it's always best to be sure. The simplest way to start moving is to find an activity you think you will enjoy, so you will be more likely to stick with it. For everyone over the age of two with normal use of the legs, walking is likely to be the very best place to start, as it is accessible to everyone. Be sure you have comfortable footwear that provides adequate support to the arches and ankles.

Decide on a regular time of day that you will exercise, at least three times a week for thirty minutes, and put that into your calendar in ink. It might also be a good idea from the outset to set some realistic goals for yourself – for more on that, turn to www.bodyresults.com/E2SMARTgoals.asp and put on paper what you hope to accomplish with your workouts, and by when. Enlist the help of a buddy for increased accountability; if you can work out with your friend, you'll likely enjoy it more and stick with it longer.

CARDIOVASCULAR EXERCISE

The first thing to add to an exercise program is aerobic activity such as walking, biking, roller blading, snowshoeing, swimming, or hiking. These activities are very low-impact, meaning they are fairly gentle on the body (unless you fall down) and participants in general tend to experience fewer joint injuries from repetitive pounding than may be the case in activities such as high-impact aerobics, stair climbing or running. All of these cardiovascular (utilizing heart and lungs) activities require that your body perform a repetitive activity for somewhat extended periods of time.

When starting out, be realistic about what you try to do. If you enjoy shopping and can regularly go to the mall and stand for a few hours at a time, then you may find that adding several brisk 30-45 minute “power walks” is appropriate. If you spend most of your days sitting and get winded going up a single set of stairs, or you have a lot of extra bodyweight that makes any exertion a challenge, you may decide that starting with a 12-15 minute walk more frequently during the week is a good target. And if you walk but would like to move to jogging, try

alternating between 2-5 minutes of jogging and 1-2 minutes of walking for a total of 20 minutes. That might look like this:

Walk 5 (warmup), jog 3 W2 J3 W2 J2 W3 (cool down) for a total of 20 minutes.

The next time you work out, add a minute to each jogging section until you can do 3 cycles x (jog 5 minutes + walk 1 minute); the very next workout, see if you can slowly jog the entire 20 minutes. Always include a gentle warm up (walk or easy jog) for a few minutes and then increase the pace. This will give you a chance to see how your feet, calves, hips, back, and the rest of you are feeling. As a rule of thumb, try to increase weekly mileage no more than 10% at any time. If your goal is to jog 2 miles 3 times a week (6 miles) one week, and 3 miles 4 times a week the next (12 miles, double the mileage from the previous week) you're setting yourself up for overuse injuries including Achilles problems, plantar fasciitis, stress fractures, or knee discomfort, to mention just a few.

Keep the following tips in mind: 1) stick to your exercise schedule and don't let anything interfere with your workouts. That's the only way you will establish a habit of exercise. 2) Listen to your body. If you're sick, you may need to take a day off. However, in most cases, if you promise yourself that you'll at least start the workout for five minutes, 9 times out of 10, simply by starting your workout, you will have enough momentum built up to continue with it. 3) Pay attention to what areas of the body feel stiff, sore or tight. If you spend a lot of time sitting, the stretches we suggest below will be perfect for you. 4) Gradually build to the point where you can sustain your aerobic activity for at least 30 minutes 3-5 times a week, and maintain that habit for at least a month. 5) After two weeks of consistent aerobic activity, add a few bodyweight resistance strength exercises to increase lean muscle mass and help burn off unwanted body fat.

FLEXIBILITY

We have a number of pictures on our website illustrating stretching exercises you can do anywhere, including sitting at your desk – for examples, please turn to Cubicle Calisthenics at www.bodyresults.com/E2CubicleCalisthenics.asp, perfect for anyone who spends a lot of time sitting at a desk; Keyboard Stiffness includes three stretches at www.bodyresults.com/E2keystiff.asp for anyone who suffers from carpal tunnel syndrome or elbow problems. Walkers in particular will want to stretch the calves (see Standing 1-leg Calf Stretch: www.bodyresults.com/s2calves.asp) and hip flexors (lunge stretch, pictured at www.bodyresults.com/S2Warmup.asp)

STRENGTH TRAINING

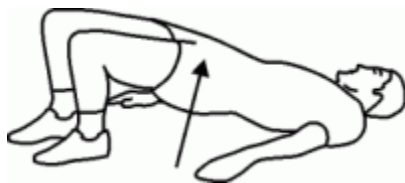
Include strength training every other day. You can put strength training on the same days as aerobic training, or on alternate days. Keep 48 hours between strength workouts, and start with light weights until you can comfortably complete 1-3 sets of 10-15 repetitions each. Below, we've selected 9 exercises appropriate for most populations, that incorporate major muscle groups and require that you balance in three-dimensional space – i.e. free weight or body weight exercises, rather than machine exercises. Do one set of 10-15 repetitions for each exercise the first week, 2 sets weeks 2-4, and add a third set after one month of regular exercise. Perform

them in the order listed, with about a minute's rest in between sets. Completing three sets of each exercise should only take you about 20 minutes to complete. You'll gradually increase your endurance and stamina, which will help with all the activities you need to do on a regular basis. Include a warmup (5 minutes of walking is fine) before doing your stretches and strength activities.



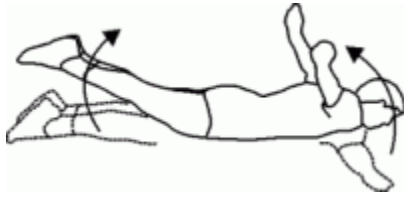
Standing Stationary Lunges

Works: Whole leg (quadriceps, glutes, hamstrings). Position feet wide apart, a light weight in each hand held at your waist. Lower the torso until both knees are at right angles, keeping your torso vertical, but do not let back knee touch the floor, and keep front knee behind shoelaces. Press through the heel of the front foot to engage the glutes (buttocks). You'll feel a good stretch in the hip and quadriceps of the leg that is back behind you. Exhale as you press away from the floor.



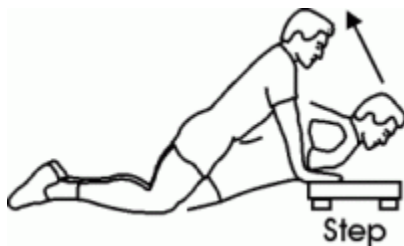
Bridges

Works: Legs, lower back (hamstrings, glutes, erector spinaes) Lie flat on your back with feet flat on the floor directly under your knees, and raise your hips as you exhale. Goal is to form a straight line from your knees down to shoulders when you're at the top of the motion. Exhale as you lift, inhale and lower butt to the floor but don't let it touch. Perform under control and really squeeze the hips at the top. Prevent the back from hyperextending (over-arching).



Iron Cross Superman

Works: Lower back (erector spinaes, hamstrings) Lie flat on your stomach, with arms out to your sides as though your torso forms a cross. With thumbs up to ceiling, exhale as you raise your torso and legs up several inches off the floor, squeezing your shoulder blades together and squeezing glutes. Control as you lower slowly to the floor. Keep a neutral neck (stay looking down at the floor) and exhale as you raise off the floor.



Modified Pushups

Works: Chest and Arms (pectorals, deltoids, triceps) For many people this might be the most difficult exercise, so we're introducing two easier modification from the toes or knees-on-the-floor versions: the wall pushup and the step pushup. The wall pushup is especially appropriate for senior women, anyone with a high percentage of bodyfat, or anyone who lacks strength in the upper body. Stand with your feet 1-2 feet away from the wall, just far enough so that when your arms are extended straight, you can place your palms flat on the wall. Slowly bend your elbows so that your body approaches the wall, exhale as you straighten the arms and push back. Once that is easy, place your hands on a bench or low step, knees on the floor, and repeat the exercise, always keeping abs tight so the back does not sway as you dip your nose to the wall or step.



1-arm Rows

Works: Back and Arms (lats, deltoids, biceps) Place your left knee and hand on a bench, step or couch, and hold a gallon jug or light dumbbell in your right hand. Think of your back as a table, and try to hold your torso still. Reach down to the floor and slightly forward with your right hand, then pull the weight up along a slight diagonal as though you're pulling the weight to your hip. Keep the elbow in close to the body. Repeat to the other side for the same number of repetitions and sets.



Triceps Kickbacks

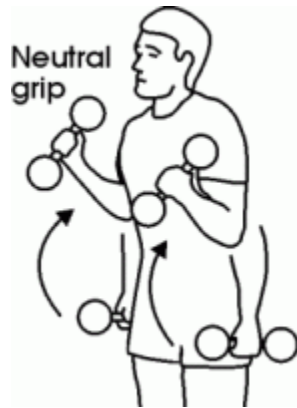
Works: Arms (triceps) Start in the end (top) position as for the 1-arm row, but use a lighter weight than you used on the rows. Keep the upper arm tight to the ribs and parallel to the ground, and back nice and flat. Exhale and extend the lower arm until the entire arm is parallel to the floor, then slowly let the forearm return to the starting position. Be sure to relax your grip on the weight. Repeat other side.



Standing Shoulder Presses

Works: Shoulders (deltoids, triceps, abdominals) Although the picture illustrates a seated shoulder press, you'll get more work from the abdominals and lower back if you perform this

standing. Hold a dumbbell in each hand, keep abdominals tight to support the back, and exhale as you press the weight straight up over your head. Imagine drawing the letter A with your hands, so the arms come wide in front of the shoulders, and narrow above you; avoid clinking the weights together over your head.



Biceps Curls

Works: Arms (biceps) Stand with feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, a dumbbell in each hand or ankle weight strapped to each wrist. Keep palms facing the midline of your body (i.e. neutral position) throughout. Keep the elbows back against your body as you lift the weight up to your shoulders. Do not let the elbows come forward or the shoulders will do more of the work. Inhale as you lower the weight, exhale as you lift.



Torso Curls

Works: Abdominals Lie on your back, feet flat on the floor and hands either across the chest (on opposite shoulders) or behind the head. Initiate the movement by pressing the small of the back into the floor, then slowly curl the head and shoulders up off the floor on an exhale, and lift as high as comfortable. Return to the floor. Keep the movement smooth and controlled and as you increase your strength, try adding a pause at the top or hold a weight at your chest or behind your head.

Remember, as with any program, once your body has adapted to it (in about 4-8 weeks for new exercisers) and you feel like you're "stuck", you may need to change something about your

program – either the exercises, order, weight you’re lifting, number of repetitions or sets. With consistent effort you should see progress in as little as a month. This is meant to be a beginning program; if you aspire to strenuous activity such as skiing, climbing, triathlons, or races, please contact us at [Trainer](#) so we can help set you up on an appropriate program, either through our WebTrainer or in person.