

Wellness Insights

Provided by:
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Fitness First: Exercise Programs

Research shows that those who are physically active are likely to live longer, healthier lives.

Physical activity can lead to many benefits:

- Weight maintenance
- Reduced blood pressure
- Improved glucose regulation
- Stronger bone density

In addition, a person who has hypertension, diabetes or a history of smoking can greatly benefit from including regular physical activity into his or her daily routine.

The First Step

If you are over 40 years of age, inactive or have health issues, consult a physician before you begin an exercise program.

A Complete Program

There are three main components to a well-balanced program of physical activity: aerobic exercise, strength training and flexibility training.

Commitment to a regular physical activity program is more important than the intensity of your workouts. Choose exercises you are likely to pursue and enjoy, such as these activities:

- Walking
- Running
- Stair climbing
- Biking
- Rowing
- Cross-country skiing
- Swimming

One should perform healthy aerobic training three to five days per week with a minimum of 20 minutes per day. Remember, if your schedule is tight, it is better to exercise for a shorter period than not at all.

Strength training is another option. Aim for strength training two to three times per week, and utilize free weights or weight machines.

For the purposes of general training, focus on two to three upper body and lower body exercises. Abdominal exercises are an important part of strength training as well.

Flexibility training is important too, but it is frequently neglected, resulting in increased tightness as you age and become less active. Stretching is safest with sustained gradual movements lasting a minimum of 15 seconds per stretch. At a minimum, strive to stretch every day.

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