

“Lack of activity destroys the good condition of every human being, while movement and methodical physical exercise save it and preserve it.” —Plato

Being consistently active helps you to live longer, have a better quality of life, improve your mental health, and improve your self-image. Take charge of your mental and physical health in only a few minutes a day.

You can make big improvements to your health and energy levels by making small and deliberate healthy lifestyle choices that involve moving more every day. Many people feel daunted by the thought of changing their lives and starting a new routine to be more active, but there are only a few key tips to remember to be successful:

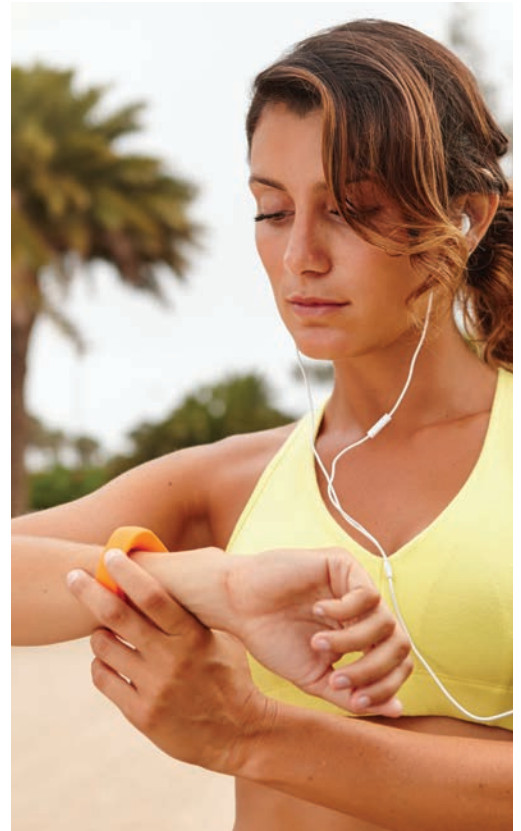
- **Emphasize fun.** What is something you love? Whether that’s music, birds, friends, trampolines, or books, you can shape your activity plan around the things you love. Walk to and from a spot where you can listen to the birds every day; explore local libraries from top to bottom; take the stairs when you visit friends; take a dance class that incorporates music you love. Make the things you love part of your activity plan.
- **Attach activity to habits.** Taking a walk after dinner is a time-honored way to get moving. What is something you do regularly? Whether it’s going to work, cooking dinner, getting the mail, or brushing your teeth, any habit can be an opportunity to move. Try doing a one-minute wall-sit every time you brush your teeth; or practice dance steps while cooking dinner; or lift your bag over your head every time you go into your house. Any routine behavior can have a small activity bonus built in.
- **Involve others.** Chances are, your friends, family, and co-workers want to be more active, too. Set active living goals together, see if you can aim for incremental advancements and variety in your routines. You could walk an extra two miles a week—or three more flights of stairs. When you meet someone who shares your activity goals, keep moving. Swap sitting at the coffeeshop for walks, and go around the block while catching up.
- **Add Audio.** Most phones can play music or podcasts, so challenge yourself to walk for at least one song, or one podcast. Having pleasant audio input can make exercise more fun and rewarding.
- **Be inventive.** Rather than thinking of movement as calisthenics or a workout, challenge yourself to be inventive with your active living. Do an extra lap around the grocery store. Stand while watching a television show, instead of sitting. At work, think about how you can add a few minutes of movement by parking further away, or getting off the bus early. Whenever you text someone, stretch one part of your body. When you open the door at home, do a little dance. When you talk on the phone, stand up for part of the call or go for a walk and cover some miles with company.



- **Be forgiving.** If you have a sedentary day, let it go. Don't overwork the next day or punish yourself—just try to be active every day! Encourage yourself the way you would encourage your best friend. It is about progress, not perfection.
- **Track your progress.** Consider using a pedometer app on your phone or purchasing a simple pedometer and have fun with it. How many steps do you take on an average work day? How many do you take on the weekend? Striving for 10,000 steps a day is recommended. However, some is better than none. See how it goes.

Daily movement reduces the risk of many health conditions—protect your health! If you already have a condition, movement reduces the symptoms. Research shows that movement helps with conditions across a broad range:

- Many forms of cancer
- Depression, stress, and anxiety
- Cardiometabolic diseases including prediabetes, diabetes, hypertension, stroke
- Musculoskeletal health, including osteoporosis and rheumatoid arthritis



“Walking: the most ancient exercise and still the best modern exercise.” —Carrie Latet