

How To Exercise to Improve Your Health

By Curt Hagedorn

Diet and exercise are the ying and yang of personal health and fitness, but if you have to choose one without the other, choose exercise. Though there are varying opinions on low-fat, low-carb, and the thousand other diets that are on the market, everyone seems to agree that regular exercise is the one thing you can count on to help you improve your overall health and lose weight. Of course, before you begin any exercise program, you should check with your doctor and, if you've never exercised in any regular way before, pick up a book which will tell you about how exercise affects your body and provide you with a basic warm up to make sure you don't injure yourself by working too hard too fast – there is nothing more frustrating than beginning an exercise program and then being stymied by a pulled muscle or other injury that can sideline you for months.

There are a lot of choices of exercise to do out there from aerobics classes to yoga to weight training to walking, and there's also enough information available out there at your local gym, YMCA, YWCA etc. for you to be able to pick and choose what kind of exercise is right for you. The difficult part is sticking with it, and here are a few tips on how to start an exercise program that becomes part of your daily life.

1. **Walk.** Walking is universally recommended as an exercise that is low impact, that just about everyone can do, and if done every day and for a reasonable amount of time, can have great results. So whether it's on a track, around the neighborhood or at a local mall, walk. The latest trend in walking is the 10,000 step method, which basically specifies that you should walk at least 10,000 steps each day. Strap on a reliable pedometer and see how close you are to reaching that goal.
2. Set a specific time, and an alternate time, for exercise at least every other day, and have some reachable short term goals – two inches off my waist by my Birthday, 20 pounds by Christmas – even a 10% loss in body weight can help improve a variety of health problems.. Though daily exercise is important, if you exercise at least an hour or two every other day you'll be doing well. The reason for the alternate time is that if you have a doctor's appointment at 9 AM, you'll be tempted to skip that day unless you've planned to exercise later.
3. If your doctor has approved your exercise program, remember that you will be tired and your muscles will hurt if you have not exercised in some time. Another one of the major ways that beginning exercisers defeat themselves is by the "how can I lose weight when I'm so overweight that exercise hurts?" It's going to hurt, and the only cure for the pain is more

regular exercise. You'll be surprised how quickly you deteriorate if you stop your plan for even a week, and if you've been working hard, your muscles will ache even more as they lose tone than they do when you're using them regularly. Remember, if it came in a bottle, everybody would have a good body – you need to work on it and work through the minor aches and pains (if they become persistent, see your doctor.)

4. Being overweight and out of shape brings on all sorts of other problems, from low self esteem to lack of energy to depression. Fortunately, diet and exercise can help you tackle all of these other problems. FORCE yourself to join Weight Watchers, or a gym or take a yoga or other non-threatening fitness class. Get out there, interact with other people who, whether you want to admit it or not, have the same problem you do.
5. Don't lie to yourself or others. Buy yourself a scale and a full-length mirror, and use them to get real and get proud. The scale tells you what you really weigh and the mirror tells you what you really look like. Use them regularly, not to torture yourself, but to prove that you can make progress towards a healthier happier you day by day.

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