

Su Familia

*The National Hispanic
Family Health Helpline*

1-866-783-2645

SuFamilia@hispanichealth.org

Exercise

What is exercise?

Exercise should be a regular part of your life. Even though you may have an active workplace, it does not count toward your daily exercise. Make time either before or after your workday to workout. Exercise is a physical activity, that moves your body in various ways to keep fit and involves bodily movement to improve or maintain physical fitness. Exercise can be simple things you love, like gardening or dancing. Choose a physical fitness program that is well-rounded and strengthens your heart, muscles, and bones.

What are the benefits of exercise?

- Reduces the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, colon and breast cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure;
- Reduces the risk of dying prematurely;
- Promotes psychological well-being by reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress. When you exercise your body produces endorphins, substances that create a natural feeling of well-being;
- Builds and maintains healthy bones, muscles, and joints;
- Improves your range of motion and flexibility;
- Benefits people with chronic or disabling conditions by improving their energy level and muscle strength;
- Maintains full functioning and independence among the elderly; and, is a
- Key component of any weight loss or weight management effort.

What do I have to know before beginning an exercise regimen?

It is recommended that you talk to your health care provider about a physical activity plan that is right for you. This is especially true if you have not been active, if you have medical problems, are middle aged or older, or are planning a vigorous exercise program. Set realistic goals for yourself and determine what you want to accomplish. If you want to lose weight, you may need to exercise more than a person who is just trying to maintain his/her weight. You should also be aware that there are different exercises that target different parts of your body and different muscle groups.

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How do I begin?

- To begin an exercise program, it is a good idea to do an activity that you enjoy, such as dancing, gardening, or taking a walk.
- Schedule exercise into your life. Start slowly 3 to 5 minutes a day.
- Decide that you will do as much exercise as you can. Your goal is to gradually make exercise a part of your life. A positive attitude helps in the early stages. Remember that progress is gradual and takes time.
- Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration.
- Find an exercise buddy. Exercising with someone else can make it more fun and motivating.
- Being fit does not have to be expensive, you can buy an exercise video, instead of paying gym membership fees.

What can I do once I start exercising?

- Build your program over time. Start at a low level and work your way up.
- Eventually you want to engage in moderate intensity physical activity for at least 30 minutes, 5 or more days of the week.
- Choose a physical fitness program that is well rounded and strengthens your heart, lungs, and muscles and increases flexibility.

How do I design a program that works for me?

In designing an exercise program, there are three things to consider:

- **Frequency:** The number of times per week the exercise is performed.
- **Intensity:** How hard you work.
- **Duration:** The amount of time you spend exercising.

The following are examples of some exercises that can help you plan a good fitness program:

- **Low Intensity:** walking, yoga, pilates, and water-aerobics
- **Moderate Intensity:** jogging, dancing, hiking, swimming laps, weight training and bicycling
- **High Intensity:** running, sprint swimming, aerobic dancing, tennis, climbing stairs, and jumping rope

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How can you increase your physical activity on a daily basis?

- Stretch before you get out of bed to give yourself more energy when you wake up.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walk during your break or lunch hour.
- Walk or bike instead of driving whenever you can.
- Dance to music.
- Walk in place when watching television.
- Play video games that require movement instead of more sedentary ones.

Resources

National Alliance for Hispanic Health

Su Familia: The National Hispanic Family Health Helpline

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<http://www.hispanichealth.org>

American Heart Association

1-800-248-8721

<http://www.americanheart.org>

President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

1-800-445-5950

<http://www.fitness.gov>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov>

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