



## **TIPS FOR GETTING MORE PHYSICALLY FIT**

Adapted from the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA)



### **1. Get a checkup**

Meet with your healthcare provider to see whether you'll need to consider any special modifications before starting an exercise program or to identify limitations.

### **2. Know your options**

Pick a program you know you will enjoy and stick with. Join an established program or develop a program you can do for little cost, using objects or props in your home or office. Decide on Morning or Night; Indoors or Outside; Large blocks of time or Short, more frequent intervals. Be realistic about how you can participate.

### **3. Start slowly**

Don't overdo it. A good way to start is to record your activities during a day, tracking how much time you are not moving and how much you are active. Then look at when you could fit in some short (maybe 10 minutes) bouts of brisk walking. Make your muscles work harder than they are used to, but in a gradual and progressive manner.

### **4. Make a date**

Find a buddy and make appointments to exercise together. That will keep you both motivated and make it more likely you'll do the walk or workout.

### **5. Set specific short- and long-term goals**

Being specific means you've set side time and made the activity a priority in your day. ("I will do a brisk, 10-minute walk in the morning before my shower, at lunch time and after dinner"). A Long-term goal could be an activity you would like to do that you feel physically incapable of right now, but may be able to do with a little effort? Setting a long-term goal will help you do it.

### **6. Make a list**

List all the reasons to be physically active-things like decreasing stress or depression, stronger bones, greater strength and flexibility to help maintain independence, increased energy, better sleep, etc. rather than an outcome (such as losing weight). Add to your list as you increase your physical activity-and keep it in a visible place.

### **7. If you're thinking of joining a facility, check it out first.**

Does the facility feel friendly? Can you change clothes comfortably? If the facility has a pool, the water temperature should be 84-86°F for moderate to vigorous activity, while warmer temperatures are nice for range-of-motion and relaxation programs. Does the facility have an easy and safe exit/entry? Ask to try various programs so you can decide which ones feel the most comfortable and fun. Is the staff friendly and interested in you? Are they qualified to work with older adults? Do they offer pre-exercise assessments, and periodic updates? Are they interested in helping you learn how to modify exercises to fit your fitness level and conditions? Do they encourage social interaction? Talk to mature adults who are in their programs and find out how satisfied they are.

## **8. Every step counts**

Wear a step counter throughout the day to count how many steps you take. Less active people tend to take about 4,000 steps or fewer per day. Aim to do 250 or more additional steps of brisk walking, until you reach 8,000 to 10,000 steps in a day.

## **9. Keep moving as much as possible**

Stretch, walk, march in place, stand and sit as many times as possible when you're talking on the phone or during TV commercials.

## **10. Do your own house and yard work**

Clean out cupboards you can safely reach. Do simple yard work yourself.

## **11. Create a support network**

Tell friends/family about your new goals and ask for their support. Consider having telephone reminders from your support network to help keep you on track.

## **12. Know your challenges**

List things that keep you from being active and come up with a solution for each. Recognize that challenges can be overcome.

## **13. Wear the right shoes**

Foot comfort and support is important for all physical activities. If you have arthritis, diabetes or orthopedic problems, you can remain physically active with the help of appropriate shoes.

## **14. Participate in events**

Once you're more physically fit, set a goal to participate in a charity event. Prepare to walk, run or bike to raise money for a special cause. Ask a friend to be your exercise and event partner

## **15 Follow a well-rounded program**

Include all five components of a successful program: warm-up, flexibility, cardio, resistance and cool down. **If it hurts, don't do it** - Work around pain, not through it.

**16. Do balance exercises, as well as strength exercises** - Focus on the major muscle groups- in the legs, chest and back

## **17. Make your car work for you**

Park at the end of the parking lot, rather than the closest space. Walk up the first flight of stairs, rather than waiting for the elevator. Add another floor every week. Walk to the grocery store or other services when possible.

## **18. Reward yourself**

When you've reached a goal treat yourself to something that reminds you of the good job you've done and encourages you to continue. It doesn't need to be food or an expensive purchase.

**Don't quit; make exercise part of your daily life!**

Call the National Institute on Aging for a free exercise guide at 1 800 222 2225