



Fitness

fact sheet

Aerobic Physical Activity Action Plan

Let's get moving, one step at a time. The Surgeon General suggests doing at least thirty minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. This will help to reduce the risk of developing certain illness and disease. It will also help maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints, and control weight. Step one below, describes physical activity that will promote overall health. To achieve more specific goals you may want to think about doing steps two and three, below.

Step One: Get started with daily activities

Think of unique ways to include activity into your day. Here are some ideas to start with:

- Go for a brisk walk
- Use the stairs when you can
- Do your own yard work
- Wash your car
- Park at the far end of the lot
- Dance to songs you like

After you feel you have built stamina by doing daily activities, you may choose to move into a routine exercise program. Please note, if you are a man over the age of 40, a woman over 50, or have a health problem, consult with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

Step Two: Choosing an aerobic activity

An Aerobic activity is anything that increases your heart rate, uses large muscle groups, and can be sustained for a long period of time. This includes, but is not limited to, activities such as walking, jogging, cycling or swimming.

Before you choose which aerobic activity you plan to do ask yourself these questions:

- Do you like to exercise indoors or outdoors?
- Do you prefer to exercise on your own or in a group setting?
- Is the cost of the activity within your budget?
- Can you do the physical activity at a time that works for you?
- Are you a new to exercise, or more experienced?
- Do you prefer a variety of choices or a set routine?





Step Three: Components of an Effective Aerobic Program

Once you've chosen an aerobic activity, be sure to incorporate the following components of a safe, effective program:

Warm-up (3-5 minutes)

A warm-up prepares your body for exercise. It slowly raises your heart rate and increases blood flow to the working muscles. This improves muscle function and lowers your risk for injury.

How do I warm-up? Do the activity you have chosen (for example: walking, swimming) at a slower pace for 3-5 minutes.

Aerobic Activity (10-20 minutes to start and slowly increase to 30-60 minutes)

Routine aerobic exercise will help your body use oxygen better. This will give you more energy, and your heart, lungs and muscles will be stronger and healthier.

How often should I perform aerobic activity? Perform aerobic activity most (4-6) days per week.

At what intensity level should I perform my aerobic activity? Intensity refers to how hard you are working. Pace your effort so that you are exerting yourself in between fairly light activity and somewhat hard activity. You should be able to talk as you exercise. If you can't talk you may be exercising too hard; if you can sing you may be going too easy.

How long should I perform aerobic activity? Start with 10 minutes of aerobic exercise. Slowly increase to 30-60 minutes per session.

Cool-down (3-5 minutes)

Cooling down allows your heart rate, breathing rate, and blood pressure to return to normal.

How do I cool down? Slowly reduce the intensity or speed of your activity as you prepare to stop. Work at a slower pace for a period of 3-5 minutes.

Stretch (5-10 minutes)

Stretching will help improve flexibility. Flexibility is the ability of your joints to move easily through their full range of motion. Stretching exercises should be done after a proper warm-up (to loosen) or after your exercise plan (to improve flexibility) because your muscles will respond best to the stretch if they are warm.

How do I stretch?

- Stretch your major muscle groups, the muscles you were using for your exercise.
- Stretch in a relaxed, controlled manner
- Hold each stretch for at least 20 seconds
- Perform each stretch one or more times
- Do not bounce
- Never stretch to the point of feeling pain
- Breathe in a normal way

Take one day at a time and keep moving for better health!