



## Education

### Exercise for Teens

Why should I exercise?

Exercise has many benefits. It can:

- Increase your strength and energy.
- Lift your mood when you feel down.
- Make your body look better and more toned.
- Help you maintain a healthy weight or lose excess body fat.
- Help you sleep.
- Improve how you feel about yourself.
- Help keep your bones strong throughout your lifetime.
- Prevent diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

How much should I exercise?

Try to exercise at a moderate level for at least 60 minutes most days of the week. In addition to being active everyday, it is recommended that you spend 20 to 30 minutes of your exercise time doing vigorous aerobic activity at least 3 times a week. Starting slow and building up to this is just fine. Every little bit counts when you're just starting, so take time for a short walk or bike ride a few times during the day.

Pay attention to how your body feels, such as getting really tired, out of breath or being too sore the next day. If you are unsure, ask your health care provider, coach, or physical education teacher. Always drink water before, during, and after exercise.

What kind of exercise is best for me?

There are 3 main types of exercise: aerobic exercise, strength training, and stretching. All are important for good health.

Aerobic exercise

Aerobic exercise works the heart and gets your muscles to use more oxygen. After a time, your heart will get stronger and able to deliver oxygen to your muscles more easily. This is what is known as "getting into shape." Start slowly. If weight reduction is your goal, it is important to do some type of aerobic activity most days, plus adding a few days of strength training.

Most school sports are aerobic and will give you a chance to get plenty of exercise several times a week. Tennis, hockey, rowing, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and cross-country running are all good examples of aerobic sports. Other aerobic exercises you can do on your own include:

- walking
- jogging
- cross-country skiing
- biking

- in-line skating
- skateboarding
- swimming
- hiking and climbing
- dancing
- using gym equipment such as a treadmill, stair-stepper, stationary bike, and elliptical trainer
- aerobic exercise classes.

## Strength Training

There are lots of benefits to strengthening your muscles. When you work your muscles, they get stronger and able to work longer without getting tired. Stomach muscles support the back, so strengthening this area is really important. One of the greatest benefits of strength training is that it helps you burn more energy when you are at rest. Muscle mass burns more calories than fat so as your muscle increases so does your ability to burn calories. There are lots of options:

- Lifting weights (make sure you are trained to lift right to avoid injury).
- Using your body for resistance (push-ups, pull-ups, lunges, squats, sit-ups, and crunches).
- Interval training where you switch between exercising hard and then resting. For example, running hard for a short time and then walking then running hard again.

## Stretching

Being flexible makes it easier to do many activities and also decreases risk for getting hurt. If you stretch before and after exercise, you will not be as sore. You can do simple stretches before and after sports or other aerobic activities. There are also other activities that improve your flexibility such as:

- yoga
- dance
- Pilates (an exercise routine that builds strength and flexibility).

How do I choose the exercise that is best for me?

If you haven't been active lately, your goal is to get started doing something physical every day. Give your lungs, heart, and muscles time to adjust by starting slowly. Think about your style. Do you like organized activities or exercising on your own? Do you need someone or something to help motivate you? If so, sign up for a class or workout with a friend or family member. Do something you enjoy. If you choose something you don't really like, you won't stick with it. To avoid getting burned out, do a variety of activities.

What if I'm not comfortable exercising in public?

If you would like to exercise, but would rather get in shape in private there are some good options. You can:

- Buy exercise equipment for your home.
- Take private lessons from a personal trainer at a health club or recreation center.
- Use exercise videos, DVDs, and CDs. Try to choose those that have instructors with degrees in fitness or exercise physiology. Not all instructors put safety first. See <http://www.collagevideo.com/> for information about ordering an exercise video catalog.

If you are severely overweight or you have other health problems such as high blood pressure, be sure to speak with your parents and health care provider before starting an exercise program.

What else can I do to improve my fitness?

Keep track of the time you spend watching television, chatting on the computer or playing video games. These activities are all fun and you don't have to give them up, but don't let them take the place of physical activities. Also try to limit the sweets, sodas, and high-fat fast foods you eat. Making healthier food choices can really improve your sports performance and help to maintain a healthy weight.

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