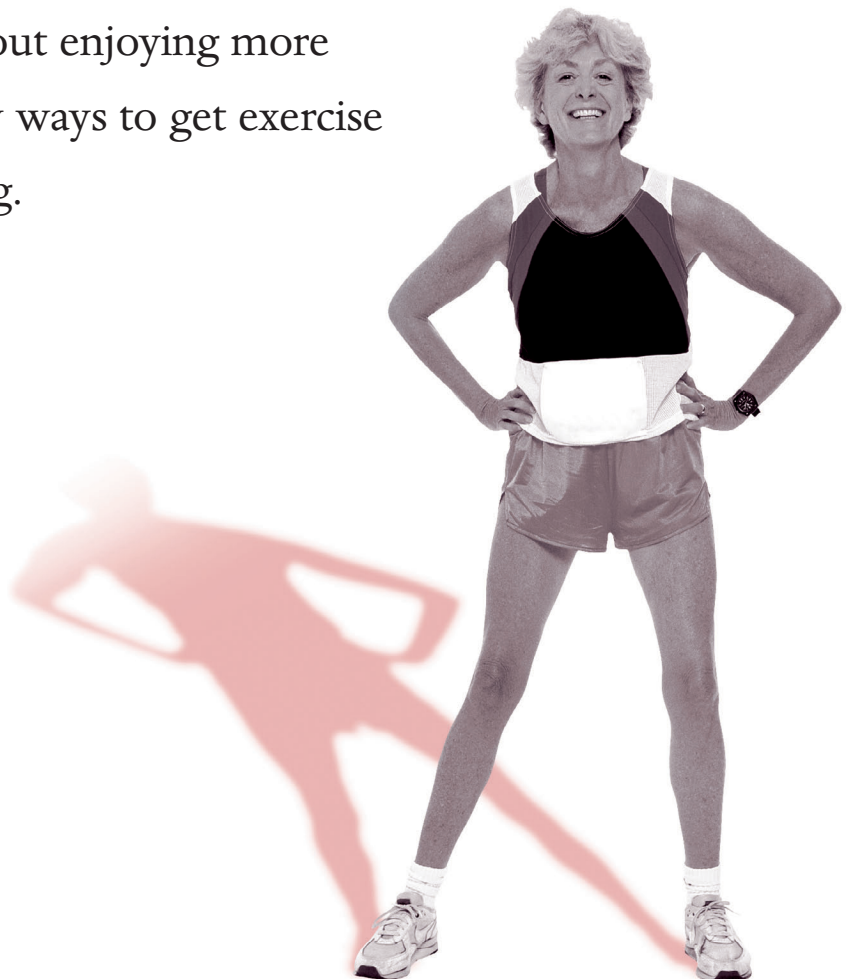


Aerobic Exercise— Put Your Heart Into It

Suppose there was a way to lower your cholesterol, lower blood pressure, lose weight, and strengthen your heart and lungs—and all at little or no cost. Would you be interested? Of course you would—and that's why you should talk with your doctor about enjoying more physical activity. There are many ways to get exercise and many easy ways to get going.



What Is Aerobic Exercise?

Aerobic exercise is any activity that gets the heart working and pumping blood faster, while speeding up your breathing. You can take part in low-impact aerobics, such as walking or swimming, or high-impact aerobics, such as running or playing tennis.

Getting Started—Safely

If you're inactive, middle-aged or older, overweight, and/or have a medical condition, be sure to consult your doctor before beginning any exercise program. Once you have a green light, there are many good reasons to get going. As mentioned, regular physical exercise alone can lower cholesterol levels and blood pressure, help you shed pounds, and improve your heart and lungs. For people concerned about their heart health, the single most memorable benefit may be this

Exercise reduces your chance of getting heart disease.

Your Exercise, Your Choice

Whether you take an exercise class, take up bicycle riding, or just take walks, it's important to choose activities that you enjoy. Variety is the spice of exercise life, so avoid boredom by finding several different exercise pursuits.

Generally, experts recommend that you work up *gradually* to exercising most days of the week for 30 to 60 minutes. Start out with low-to-moderate-level activities, and increase the time and intensity of your exercise as you become healthier.

Exercise Intensities: Low, Medium, High

Physical activities are grouped into 3 levels of intensity, or effort: light (low), moderate (medium), and vigorous (high). Here are exercise examples for all—notice that most do *not* involve joining a health club or playing a structured sport.

Light-Intensity Activities

Walking slowly

Playing golf (with cart)

Swimming, slow treading

Gardening

Bicycling (light effort)

Dusting/vacuuuming

Light stretching or warm-up exercise

Moderate-Intensity Activities

Walking briskly

Playing golf (pulling/carrying clubs)

Swimming, recreational

Mowing the lawn (power mower)

Tennis, doubles

Bicycling (under 10 mph, mostly level terrain)

Scrubbing floors, washing windows

Lifting weights

Vigorous-Intensity Activities

Racewalking, jogging, running

Swimming laps

Mowing the lawn (hand mower)

Tennis, singles

Bicycling (over 10 mph or up steep hills)

Moving furniture

Circuit training (performing a series of exercise-machine workouts)

For the Deskbound and Busy

Since any exercise is better than no exercise, don't give up if you occasionally miss an activity. Many people find they can squeeze in some exercise before or after work or meals by incorporating some of these tips.

- Leave the car at home and walk, cycle, or jog to work, the store, or your place of worship
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator
- Play with children or pets. (Too tired after work? Try it before your day starts)
- Instead of a coffee or cigarette break, enjoy a fitness break: walk around the building or your floor, or do some desk exercises
- Exercise while watching TV (stretch, ride a stationary bike, use a treadmill, use hand weights)
- Dance to your favorite music

Remember

With so many good health reasons to enjoy regular exercise, it's important to make time in your life for physical activity. Talk first with your doctor, then find ways to make exercise that you enjoy a regular, fun part of your life.