Obesity Association

A division of the **American Diabetes Association®**

Physical Activity

If you're living with obesity, physical activity is one of the best ways to improve your health, boost wellbeing, and prevent other chronic conditions. Even small amounts of physical activity have a big impact and you don't need to run or spend time at the gym to be active—you can get moving at home doing the things you love.

The goal is to move more throughout your day, which adds up over time to help you thrive. Aim to work up to 150 minutes of movement per week. Start slowly and build to this goal by finding your fun, discovering the benefits, and learning to overcome barriers.

Getting Started

If you've never been physically active before, you may not know where to begin. It's important to be kind to yourself and know that slip-ups may happen. Try the following at the beginning and throughout your weight-wellness journey to be successful:

1. Start slowly: Talk to your health care team about suggestions for activities and goals, and if there are any activities to avoid at this point for safety concerns. Start slow with movements that are comfortable (low intensity) and get you moving for short periods, like walking or swimming. Aim for about 10–15 minutes a day and slowly increase the time as the activity gets easier. It's important to listen to your body and not push yourself too hard at first.

Over time, aim for activity that's a bit harder each week—where you're breathing heavier but you can still talk (moderate intensity). To reach the goal of 150 minutes, try walking 30 minutes a day five days a week.

2. Find your fun: Find activities that you enjoy, whether it's dancing, gardening, swimming, or walking with a friend. The more fun you have, the easier it will be to stick with your routine.

3. Focus on your pattern, not perfection: If you miss a planned activity, don't worry. Instead, focus on what you can do to reach your activity goal the next day and in the future. This journey is all about making physical activity a part of your daily life, whether it's walking, swimming, or dancing. Every bit of activity counts.

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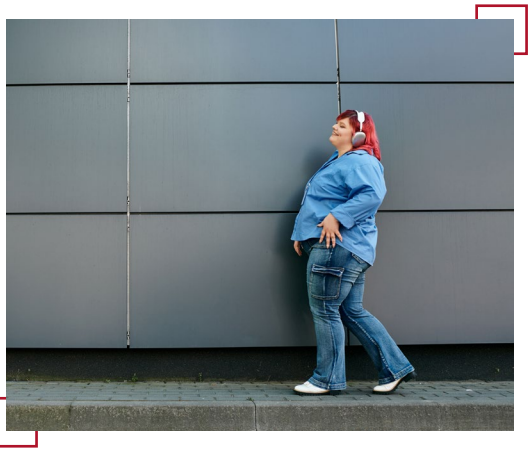
Benefits	
Helps with weight wellness	Physical activity helps you lose weight or maintain a healthy weight. Even modest weight loss (5-10% of your body weight) can have major health benefits.
Lowers health risks	Regular physical activity can lower your risk for other health conditions, too, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, kidney disease, and more. It helps by strengthening your heart, improving circulation, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and improving blood glucose (blood sugar) management.
Boosts mood and reduces stress	Physical activity causes your body to release your body's natural "feel-good" chemicals (endorphins). This helps reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Regular physical activity can also improve your sleep, making it easier to rest and recover for the next day.
Increases mobility and flexibility	Physical activity, especially strength training and stretching exercises, can help improve your joint function and flexibility. Swimming and water aerobics are great low-impact exercises that are easy on the joints.

Overcoming Barriers

Barriers are things that prevent you from doing something else. For example, you may not complete your physical activity because you have no energy, have no time, are injured, etc. Learning how to overcome these barriers will allow you to reach your goals and be flexible when life's unexpected hurdles cross your path.

1. Time: If you're too busy to move for 30 minutes at a time, try breaking it up into shorter 10- or 15-minute sessions throughout the day. You can also walk during your lunch break or after dinner or even try an online workout class at home.



2. Energy: If you're feeling low on energy, start with light activities that don't tire you out, like stretching or walking. As you repeat the activity each day and get stronger, you'll notice that exercise boosts your energy. Or, if you've been working out in the evenings but find you have more energy in the morning, get moving earlier in the day.

3. Motivation: Find a workout buddy or join a group class to make exercise more enjoyable. And take notice of how your health improves as you move more. Do you have more energy? Feel less tired taking the stairs? Like how your clothes fit? Tracking your progress and celebrating small wins can keep you going.

You Got This

It's never too late to start! Begin with small steps, stay consistent, and celebrate the progress you make along the way. You'll notice a difference in how you feel, look, and behave that will pave the path of your weight-wellness journey.

Help us improve the information and guidance we provide by sharing your feedback on this resource. Scan the QR code for the evaluation survey.