

Exercise for 5–18 year olds

How to get started

Daily physical activity and healthy, balanced meals help keep your heart, lungs, brain and body stay strong and healthy. They also help you maintain a healthy weight and prevent illness and disease when you are older. Fun physical activities also improve concentration and self-confidence. Healthy heart exercise, active play or physical activities all help prevent stress, reduce depression and anxiety, and improve how you sleep.

Some diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity and high blood pressure are increased if you don't get enough daily exercise. If you sit a lot during the day, watch television or play computer games for more than an hour a day then this can lead to health problems. Any kind of regular physical activity, such as walking to school, skating or cycling in the park, can help prevent these types of health problems. Sometimes, home time or school work may limit your opportunities to enjoy daily exercise. However, it is important for your health to make it a priority.

Choose activities that you enjoy, can do with friends or family, and fit into your life—there is a wide range to choose from!

Take all medicines as recommended by your doctor or pharmacist.

Warm up and cool down

Always start an activity with a 10–15-minute warm up. Warm-up exercises include stretching your arms and legs, moving your body more and beginning the physical activity at a low effort level. These warm up activities can be done standing up, walking around, marching on the spot or seated.

Always end an activity with a 10–15-minute cool down. Cool-down exercises include stretching the body and slowing down your activity. You should feel happy, relaxed but energised after physical activity or exercise!

The exercises!

Healthy heart activities—get your heart rate up!

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| How often: | Aim to enjoy physical activity at least every day. If you feel your fitness level is low, start with 2–3 times a week and add more weekly sessions as you start to feel fitter and healthier. |
| How hard: | Engage in moderate to vigorous effort—aim to get slightly breathless. If your fitness level is low, start gently and build up the effort of your workout over time. |
| How long: | At least 60 minutes to several hours a day. If your fitness level is low, start with 20 minutes and build up the duration by 10 minutes per session as your fitness levels improve. |
| Type: | Fun activities include biking, running, walking, hiking, swimming, dancing, Zumba™, cheerleading, basketball, football, hockey, boxing, skating, tennis, cross-country skiing, volleyball and hiking. Recreational activities such as badminton and table tennis are great social activities too. Activities could include walking the dog, bike riding, gardening (if you don't have space for your own, get a plot in a community garden), hiking, swimming, skipping, hula hooping, indoor rock climbing or taking the stairs instead of the elevator. |

What will it do for me?

Heart healthy exercise and physical activities will help you feel fit, energetic and positive about life! It is also a fun way to maintain a healthy weight, spend time with friends and reduce your risk of disease and illness.

Strength exercises—use your muscles!

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| How often: | Twice a week. |
| Type: | Choose fun activities that help you keep your bones and muscles fit and healthy. Jungle gyms, climbing walls and social activities that include time spent carrying, lifting or using strength training equipment are great ways to help you improve your stamina, bone and muscle health. Try recreational activities such as ball games or gymnastics. Remember that technique and safety are important. Ask an adult to help with or demonstrate equipment or techniques, if necessary. You may find a weekly fund raising event, or a community cause can help you enjoy more activities and include some strength physical activities. This might include car washing or gardening, or extracurricular physical and sports activities. |

What will it do for me?

Regular, fun strength activities help improve bone, muscle and joint health. They also help you maintain a healthy weight, gain self-confidence and self-esteem.

Flexibility exercises—stretch!

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| How often: | Twice a week. |
| Type: | Gymnastics, yoga, Pilates, swimming, certain martial arts or gentle home stretching exercises. Try joining a stretch class or stretching out with friends in the park or garden. |

What will it do for me?

Regular stretch exercises are effective for reducing anxiety and helping you feel relaxed. They also help promote and maintain bone, muscle and joint health and improve posture.

Balance exercises—move with confidence!

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| How often: | Twice a week. Start with one session per week, if necessary, and gradually work towards two. |
| Type: | Trip rock climbing, gymnastics, martial arts, sailing, windsurfing, yoga, Tai Chi or home balance exercises. Do seated balance exercises if you are at high risk of falling. |

What will it do for me?

Practising balance exercises helps to train your body to react more quickly to impending balance loss, which gives you confidence on your feet!

Your exercise, your way!

Choose activities that are easy to start with and that you enjoy. Daily walking, cycling, swimming and chair-based exercises

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are excellent choices. Exercise with friends and family, or join a group class. Try exercising both indoors and outdoors and see which you prefer!

Exercise safety

If you have a long-term health problem, discuss the best ways to increase your daily physical activities with your doctor.

Ask your doctor or school teacher for more information about how to exercise safely and how to keep up your physical activity levels. Start with shorter sessions (e.g. 10–15 minutes) and slowly build up to longer sessions of activity.

Aim to get slightly out of breath, but exercise sensibly and stop the activity if you feel unwell.

Always wear comfortable clothing and shoes that give good support. Take frequent breaks if necessary, and drink water before, during and after exercise.

Ensure you exercise safely at all times, and ask for assistance if you are unsure about any exercises.

SAMPLE CHAPTER ONLY