

# Exercising and obesity

## How to get started

A structured exercise plan combined with a healthy, balanced diet is the most effective way to prevent and treat obesity. A weight loss plan designed with long-term specific goals as prescribed by and agreed upon with your doctor or healthcare provider to reduce your weight and improve your health will also help reduce the significant risks of hypertension, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, stroke, dementia, joint problems, disability and immobility.

Medical intervention, self-motivation, a focus on overall health goals and a long-term commitment to changing your behaviour, including good food selections and reducing your calorie intake, can result in a minimum 10% reduction in your weight. Ask friends and family to help support you. Set realistic goals that are part of an overall healthy, balanced eating plan together with a clear exercise plan that incorporates daily cardiovascular exercise. A reward system for meeting weight loss targets may help you.

Ask your doctor or healthcare provider to help you develop an exercise plan to improve your ability to enjoy the activities of daily living and, if necessary, advise you on exercising with other disease conditions. Choosing to incorporate daily increased physical activity (e.g. regular walking, cycling, taking the stairs) instead of inactivity (e.g. watching TV, driving, taking the escalator) into your weight loss plan can also help you to improve and maintain weight control.

**Take all medicines as recommended by your doctor or pharmacist.**

## Warm up and cool down

**Always start your exercise session with a 10–15-minute warm up to loosen up the muscles and raise the heart rate safely.** Warm-up exercises include simple stretches, range-of-motion activities and beginning the activity at a low intensity. They can be done standing up, walking around, marching on the spot or seated.

**Always end your exercise session with a 10–15-minute cool down (minimum 10 minutes) to ensure your heart rate and breathing return to normal safely.** Cool-down exercises include simple stretches and slowly decreasing the intensity of your activity. You should feel relaxed but energised after exercise!

## The exercises!

### Cardiovascular/stamina exercises—get your heart rate up!

<b>How often:</b>	Aim for at least 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week, or 150 minutes a week in total. If you are new to exercise, start with 2–3 days a week and add additional sessions as your strength and stamina increase.
<b>How hard:</b>	Moderate intensity—aim to get slightly out of breath. Work to an intensity level of ‘somewhat hard’ to ‘hard.’ Increase to vigorous intensity after consultation with your doctor, especially if you have other health problems.
<b>How long:</b>	Aim for 30–60 minutes. If you haven’t exercised before, start with 5–10-minute sessions and add 10-minute intervals until you can comfortably exercise for 30 minutes.

<b>Type:</b>	Choose low-impact exercises such as walking, Nordic walking, swimming, cycling, and aqua or step aerobics. Group exercise classes such as dance classes or exercising in water or the outdoors are especially beneficial.
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### What will it do for me?

*Regular exercise has been shown to help you lose weight as part of a structured, healthy diet and exercise plan. It also improves your blood sugar control, reduces abdominal fat and promotes body fat metabolism while preserving lean mass.*

### Strength exercises—use your muscles!

<b>How often:</b>	Twice a week.
<b>How hard:</b>	Start with light or moderate weights or resistance exercises.
<b>How many:</b>	Choose a variety of 8–10 exercises targeting the upper and lower body, and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Try 1–3 sets of each exercise.
<b>Type:</b>	Try weight training, resistance training or join a circuit class using gym equipment. At home, try squats, calf raises, wall push-ups, arm curls, knee curls, front and side arm raises, or chair stands using weights or a household item such as a can. Household chores such as carrying shopping, mowing the lawn or gardening are also good strength-building exercises.

### What will it do for me?

*Strength training burns less kilojoules than cardiovascular exercise but it helps maintain and increase your lean muscle mass. It also helps keep muscles, joints and bones strong and therefore helps improve mobility and strength for doing the activities of daily living. It also significantly reduces your risk of developing diabetes.*

### Flexibility exercises—stretch!

<b>How often:</b>	Twice a week.
<b>How many:</b>	Try 8–10 stretch exercises using the upper and lower body.
<b>How long:</b>	Hold each stretch for 10–30 seconds.
<b>Type:</b>	Try Tai Chi, yoga, Pilates, swimming or gentle home stretching exercises.

### What will it do for me?

*Regular stretch exercises promote and maintain bone, muscle and joint health.*

### Balance exercises—move with confidence!

<b>How often:</b>	Twice a week.
<b>How many:</b>	Choose 2–3 balance exercises and repeat each exercise 10–15 times.
<b>How long:</b>	Hold each balance for 10–30 seconds.
<b>Type:</b>	Try yoga, Tai Chi or home balance exercises. Always exercise safely when doing balance exercises. If you are at high risk of falling, do seated balance exercises or exercise using a sturdy chair or wall for support.

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## What will it do for me?

*Practising balance exercises helps to train your body to react more quickly to impending balance loss, thereby reducing the risk of falls, fractures and injuries. They also improve your posture.*

## Your exercise, your way!

Choose fun activities that are easy to start with, and that you enjoy. Exercise with friends and family or join a group class. Try exercising both indoors and outdoors and see which you prefer!

## Exercise safety

Being obese can cause significant joint problems, disability and immobility. Choose daily exercises that are low impact, minimise the risk of injury and increase your compliance and activity levels. Ask for advice on or a demonstration of exercise equipment or facilities to help you maximise the health benefits.

Start with shorter sessions (e.g. 10–15 minutes) and slowly build up to the recommended level.

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.

SAMPLE CHAPTER ONLY