

Energize yourself!

Are you ready to get started on your workout? Taking that first step can be a challenge, even when you know that regular exercise is a key part of a healthy lifestyle. Before making the leap, learn the basics of a good fitness program: flexibility, strength training and cardiovascular exercise.

Flexibility

When you're trying to get in shape, your first instinct may be to just "go for it." You want to burn calories and build muscle tone as quickly as possible, and you may feel like stopping to stretch is holding up your workout. It isn't. Flexibility is defined as the range of motion around a joint. By increasing your flexibility, you will not only reduce your risk of injury caused by straining tight muscles, you will have a direct impact on the quality of your exercise.

Strength Training

Many people associate lifting weights with bulging muscles and body builders. But muscle conditioning, either with weights or other forms of exercise, has broad health benefits. For example, the more muscle you have,

the more calories you'll burn – even at rest. That's a hard working pound of muscle! Also, muscle conditioning has been shown to increase bone density, which decreases your risk for osteoporosis.

Cardio

Whether it's running, swimming, biking or hiking, any fitness regimen should involve a regular cardiovascular workout. You will burn calories, which helps reduce body fat, and cardiovascular exercise helps distribute more blood and oxygen throughout your body. The more oxygen the body's tissues have, the more productive they are.

When setting off on any fitness program, it's a good idea to check with your doctor first and take it slow. Keep the intensity of your exercise mild at first and increase it as you gain endurance. Vary the frequency, intensity, length or type of your exercise to make the most of your workouts. That way you can keep improving your fitness over the long haul!

No time for excuses

If you have trouble sticking with a fitness program, you're not alone. But the health benefits from regular exercise are worth the extra motivation it takes to keep going. Tips for staying motivated:

- Start slowly and set small goals. Remember, you are building a habit that will last a lifetime.
- Treat yourself when you reach fitness goals – a new pair of athletic shoes or workout clothes.
- Let your family and friends know about your commitment to improving your health. They can be a big source of encouragement.
- Find a workout partner. Walking with a friend will seem more like fun than exercise.
- Schedule your workout time just like any other appointment on your calendar.
- Keep a workout diary. Having a written record of your progress will motivate you to continue.

QUICK TAKE

The Dangers of Inactivity

One of the biggest health risks to Americans today is doing nothing at all. Think there are no consequences to being inactive? Think again!

It increases your disease risk.

Those who are inactive are at greater risk for developing common medical conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, some cancers, osteoporosis, diabetes and obesity. Even moderate activity can help decrease these risks.

It leads to a lower quality of life.

Lack of exercise and low fitness are associated with reduced ability to do daily activities. This, in turn, lowers a person's ability to live independently into their senior years.

It shortens life span.

Preliminary studies conducted at The Cooper Institute in Dallas suggest that people who are moderately or highly fit live five to eight years longer, respectively, than people who are unfit.

Ready to take action? Check out these Medica resources.

Health club reimbursement program

Get paid to get fit!

Join our popular health club reimbursement program, Fit ChoicesSM by Medica¹, and earn a \$20 credit toward your health club dues – up to \$240 per year – when you work out just 8 days a month. Choose from more than 8,000 health club and fitness facilities, including our nationwide partners: Life Time Fitness®, Anytime Fitness®, Snap Fitness™ or Curves®. To learn more, visit medica.com/fitchchoices or call Medica Customer Service at 952-945-8000 (toll free 1-800-952-3455).

"Get in Shape" Healthy Living Program

From beginners just taking their first steps towards increasing their activity level, to experienced exercisers looking to boost their existing fitness regimen, this six-week online program will get you moving in the right direction. Learn more and sign up at medica.com/myhealthmanager.



Discover all the valuable health and wellness programs for you at medica.com/managemyhealth.

¹If available through your employer.

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COM5469-50509