

Your Guide to Exercise

What are the benefits of exercise?

Exercise is a planned physical activity that uses energy to help you maintain or improve your fitness and health. The benefits of exercise are plentiful. Exercise can help you:

1. Lower your risk of chronic diseases e.g., heart disease, high cholesterol, diabetes.
2. Improve your heart and lung function.
3. Reduce your weight.
4. Reduce your risk of bone or joint problems.
5. Manage your emotions better.



Advice/precautions

- If you have any existing medical condition, please inform your doctor or physiotherapist before commencing on any exercise programme.
- Do not exercise if you are not feeling well.
- Hydrate sufficiently before, during and after exercise.
- Warm up before exercising and cool down after exercising.
- Wear comfortable shoes and clothes when exercising.
- Stop exercising if you feel unwell. Consult a doctor if the symptoms do not ease with rest.

Types of exercises

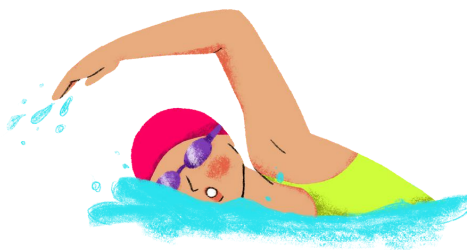
There are three types of exercise – flexibility, aerobic and strengthening. It is important that your exercise regime includes a combination of these to help you improve your overall fitness and achieve a healthy weight.

1. Aerobic exercise

Aerobic exercise refers to exercise that increases your heart rate. This includes brisk walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, and dancing. Aerobic exercise is important in maintaining or improving your heart and lung function.

If your goal is to maintain your weight or attain minimal weight loss, it is recommended you perform 150 to 250 minutes (about 4 hours) of moderate intensity aerobic exercise per week.

If you wish to lose weight, you should aim for more than 250 minutes a week, at moderate intensity.



What does intensity mean?

Intensity refers to how hard your body is working during physical activity. Intensity of physical activity can be determined simply by using a 'talk test' or the Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale.

Talk Test

Moderate intensity:

You can talk comfortably but not sing. You may notice a slight increase in breathing and heart rate. You may also be perspiring.

Vigorous intensity:

You are unable to say more than a few words without gasping for breath. You will notice a significant increase in heart rate and find yourself breathing hard and fast.

Here are some examples of physical activities at different intensities:

- Light: Slow walking, shopping, light household chores e.g., washing dishes, ironing/folding clothes, sweeping
- Moderate: Brisk walking, leisure cycling or swimming, playing doubles badminton, dancing
- Vigorous: Jogging/running, playing singles badminton, skipping with a rope

Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale

0	Nothing at all	Able to maintain a conversation or sing with no breathlessness or sweating	
0.5	Extremely weak (Just noticeable)		
1	Very weak		
2	Weak(light)		
3	Moderate		
4			
5	Strong (heavy)	Only able to speak a short sentence	
6			
7	Very strong		
8		Only able to say a few words	
9			
10	Extremely strong (almost maximal)		
	Maximum		

To help you attain the above recommendation of 250 minutes (about 4 hours) of exercise per week, you can consider accumulating it over 5 days per week, for 50 minutes each day. If you have not been exercising, you should start off with 10 – 20 minutes of low intensity exercise and gradually increase the time and intensity as you progress over the next few weeks.

To ensure exercise becomes part of your lifestyle, do find ways to enjoy it. One way of doing this would be to treat it as a fun activity and include your friends and family.

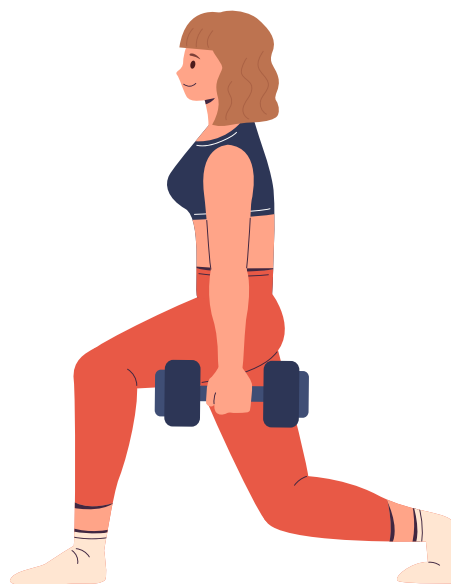


2. Strengthening exercise

Strengthening exercises help you build muscle mass. Strong muscles are important as it prevents additional stress on your joints and minimizes your risk of injury.

Strong muscles have been associated with numerous health benefits like a reduction in chronic disease risk factors, increase in lean muscle mass and loss of body fat. Strong muscles are important in supporting your weight loss journey as stronger muscles burn more calories at rest.

Strengthening exercises can be done using weights (dumbbells or kettlebells), resistance bands or machine weights. It is recommended you include strengthening exercises in your exercise regime on alternate days (2–3 times per week).



Tips for safe strength training

- Always start with a lighter resistance to minimize risk of injury.
- Avoid locking your joints when exercising.
- Ensure proper form. Your physiotherapist will be able to guide you.
- Never hold your breath. Breathe out when you are lifting or pushing. Breathe in as you slowly release the weight or load.
- Listen to your body. Only increase your load or weight if you can finish 12 repetitions comfortably.



3. Flexibility exercise

Flexibility exercises are important in reducing muscle tightness and your risk of injury. Being flexible allows your joints to move through the full range of motion when performing aerobic or strengthening exercises. An example of flexibility exercise is stretching, which can be performed before and after aerobic or strengthening exercise.



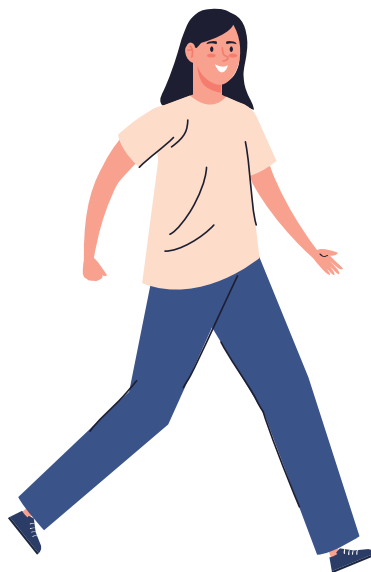
Tips for safe stretching

- Always stretch slowly and smoothly for as far as you can, without causing pain.
- Breathe normally.
- Hold the stretch for 20 – 30 seconds and repeat 3 – 5 times.



With advances in technology, we find ourselves spending a longer time sitting at home, at our desk or on the bus. This reduces the overall energy expenditure and places us at a risk of weight gain.

Let us make it a conscious effort to be on our feet more often! For more information on how to exercise appropriately, get in touch with your doctor or physiotherapist.



Contributed by Physiotherapy, Rehabilitation, Allied Health Services

This brochure is produced for educational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Please seek the advice of a qualified healthcare provider before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health or medical condition.

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