

**MAINTAIN, DON'T GAIN**

# Festive Fitness: Benefits of Physical Activity

Research shows that those who are physically active are likely to live longer, healthier lives.

The benefits of physical activity include:

- Weight maintenance
- Reduced blood pressure
- Improved glucose regulation
- Stronger bone density

Also, a person who has hypertension, diabetes or a history of smoking can greatly benefit from including regular physical activity into their daily routine.

## The First Step

If you are over 40 years of age, inactive, or have health issues, consult a physician before you begin an exercise program.

## A Complete Program

There are three main components to a well-balanced program of physical activity: aerobic exercise, strength training, and flexibility training.

Commitment to a regular physical activity program is more important than the intensity of your workouts. Choose exercises you are likely to pursue and enjoy, such as:

- Walking
- Running
- Stair Climbing
- Biking
- Rowing
- Cross-Country Skiing
- Swimming

Healthy aerobic training should be performed three to five days a week with a minimum of 20 minutes per day. Remember, if your schedule is tight, it is better to exercise for a shorter period of time than not at all.

Strength training is another option. Strength training should be done two to three times per week, and is performed with free weights or weight machines.

For the purposes of general training, two to three upper body and lower-body exercises should be done. Abdominal exercises are an important part of strength training as well.

Flexibility training is important too, but is frequently neglected, resulting in increased tightness as you age and become less active. Stretching is most safely done with sustained gradual movements lasting a minimum of 15 seconds per stretch. At minimum, strive to stretch every day.



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## Start Sensibly

Don't begin your exercise program too ambitiously. The key to success is to start slowly and increase the difficulty of your workouts as you become more fit. Those who overdo it often experience muscle soreness, become discouraged, and quit. Rather than trying to run three miles on your first day, begin by running a mile and increasing your distance as your fitness level improves. Most importantly, remember that feeling dizzy or ill is your body's way of telling you that you are working too hard. If this happens, take a break or stop your workout for the day.

## At What Pace Should I Be Exercising?

Exercising should be fairly comfortable for you. Your pace should be just below the point at which you start to breathe quickly. Exercising at this pace produces two desirable results: it mobilizes fat burning and helps you develop endurance.

This means that for maximum fat burning, longer, slower exercise is more beneficial than short strenuous workouts. If you are reasonably fit and are exercising at the proper pace, you should burn between 400 and 600 calories per hour during any aerobic exercise. This includes riding a stationary bicycle, walking or running on a treadmill or using a stair climber.

## Did You Know...?

Many Americans report getting little to no leisure time during due to long work hours and household responsibilities. As a result, obesity is becoming more of a trigger for health problems and increased health spending than smoking.

