

10 tips for starting—and staying with—an exercise program

- 1. Ask for a checkup.** Before you start an exercise plan, get a physical exam to determine just how much you should be doing and how soon.
- 2. Find opportunities to exercise.** They're everywhere. You don't need to join a gym or sign up for a class. You can find them in your daily routine. For example, invite a neighbor for a walk instead of chatting on the porch, or use the stairs instead of the elevator at work. The bits and snatches of exercise all add up.
- 3. Set a goal.** Know what you want to accomplish. Choose something simple and achievable. For instance, make it your goal to walk a mile, not to run a marathon.
- 4. Start small and work up.** It's hard to change habits overnight. So increase your activity gradually. If you're not used to exercising, just put on your tennis shoes and walk around the house on Day One. For the next few days, take a walk down the street. When you feel up to it, try to walk around the block. Work your way up to your one-mile goal. Once you achieve it, reset your goal—to two miles.
- 5. Make a plan.** Before you go to bed, plan how you'll exercise the next day. Set aside the time, and get special clothes or equipment ready. And have a Plan B, in case your first choice for exercise depends on the weather.
- 6. Exercise with a partner.** Partners can encourage each other, and exercise is a lot more fun with a buddy to talk to. Ask a friend to join you. Or sign up for a tennis or water aerobics class for group support—and to make some new friends, too.
- 7. Consider a trainer.** A trainer can get you started and keep you motivated. Health club dues may include the services of a staff trainer for the first sessions, or you can hire one at an hourly rate. A personal trainer will also come to your house, but that's usually more expensive.
- 8. Keep track of your progress.** Each day jot down how much time you spend exercising. It'll help motivate you to keep up your efforts. You can also track your progress on The President's Challenge Web site (www.presidentschallenge.org) or download a copy of their "Adult Active Lifestyle Log" (www.presidentschallenge.org/pdf/active_lifestyle.pdf). In this program, if you log at least 30 minutes of exercise a day, five days a week for six weeks, you can earn a Presidential Active Lifestyle Award.
- 8. Expect aches and pains.** In the beginning, muscles that haven't been used in a while will be sore. Be careful not to overdo it. Eventually, you'll develop conditioning.
- 10. Make it fun.** Find an exercise activity that you enjoy. Swim at the town pool, take a folk dancing class, or organize your friends to go walking or hiking once a week. The more you like an activity, the longer you'll stick with it.