

## Physical Activity

### What Can Physical Activity Do for Me?

- Helps keep your blood glucose, blood pressure, HDL cholesterol and triglycerides on target
- Lowers your risk for pre-diabetes, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke
- Relieves stress
- Strengthens your heart, muscles and bones
- Improves your blood circulation and tones your muscles
- Keeps your body and your joints flexible

Even if you've never exercised before, you can find ways to add physical activity to your day. You'll get benefits, even if your activities aren't strenuous. Once physical activity is a part of your routine, you'll wonder how you did without it.

### What Kinds of Physical Activity are Best?

#### A complete physical activity routine includes four kinds of activity:

1. Activity—walking, using the stairs, moving around—throughout the day
2. Aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, swimming, or dancing
3. Strength training, like lifting light weights
4. Flexibility exercises, such as stretching

### Aerobic Exercise

Aerobic exercise makes your heart and bones strong, relieves stress and improves blood circulation. It also lowers your risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke by keeping your blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol levels on target. Aim for about 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week. If you haven't been very active recently, start out with 5 or 10 minutes a day. Then work up to more time each week. Or split up your activity for the day—try a brisk 10-minute walk three times each day. If you're trying to lose weight, you may want to aim for more than 30 minutes a day.

#### Here are some ways to get aerobic exercise:

- Take a brisk walk every day
- Go dancing or take a dance aerobics class
- Swim or do water aerobics
- Take a bicycle ride outdoors or use a stationary bicycle indoors

### Strength Training

Strength training helps build strong bones and muscles and makes everyday chores like carrying groceries easier. With more muscle, you burn more calories, even at rest.

#### Do your strength routine several times a week. Here are some ways to do strength training:

- Lift light weights at home
- Join a class that uses weights, elastic bands, or plastic tubes
- When you travel, make time to use the hotel fitness center. Or bring lightweight, easy to pack resistance bands with you
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### Flexibility Exercises

Flexibility exercises, also called stretching, help keep your joints limber and lower your chances of getting hurt. Gentle stretching for 5 to 10 minutes helps your body warm up and get ready for activities and cool down afterwards.

### How to Get Started

Choose one or two things you'd like to try to get started. Then set a realistic, achievable plan to make it happen. Learn more about setting realistic, achievable goals.

### Keep a Record of Your Progress

Keep track of your activity. You might find that writing everything down helps keep you on target. Think about what works best for you. You might try a notebook, calendar, spreadsheet, cell phone or online activity tracker to log and record your progress.

### How a Support System can Help

It may be helpful to meet on a regular basis with others who are also trying to be active. Think about joining a group for exercise or general support. Or find a walking buddy. Then work together to reach your goals.