



# Getting Active Starter Pack

## Which exercise is best for me?

If you're a complete beginner, you can't go wrong with walking – it's the best free exercise programme there is. For anyone with joint or respiratory problems, swimming provides a whole-body workout, although it's not weight-bearing and won't help maintain healthy bones. Cycling is another non-weight-bearing exercise that's good for joints. Recumbent bikes, where your thighs are in a forward position at 90 degrees to your body, are better for people with back or shoulder problems. Running or jogging is a great free activity, but it can strain your knee and hip joints, especially if you run on hard surfaces – you need to wear good-quality trainers to protect your joints. If you find it hard to stay motivated, exercise classes provide variety, a great social environment and are good for beginners. If you feel too self-conscious to join a class or put on a swimming costume, invest in an exercise DVD or start by borrowing one from the library. Try to find the approach that suits you.

Wherever you start, the key is to commit yourself. Like you, most regular exercisers have busy lives. The difference is that they make exercise a priority. It takes around three months to form an exercise habit, so schedule it into your life. Look at what you can clear from your diary or identify any spare time you can use to fit in some activity and consider dropping some inactivity (like watching TV) so that you can fit in your exercise. Choose the time of day that suits you best. Exercising early in the day will help to elevate your mood and energy levels for the day. It's important to warm up properly as your body temperature is lower in the morning (download the 'Advice on warming up and cooling down' information sheet), which can increase the risk of injury. When you exercise in the afternoon or evening you tend to put in more effort since exercise feels easier and your muscles are warm.

Exercising out of doors has added benefits, particularly in the summer months when exposure to sunshine will increase your production of vitamin D (winter UV is not strong enough).



## Set your goals

As with your weight loss, setting yourself some short- and longer-term exercise goals gives you a clear idea of what you're aiming for and helps you track your progress.

- **Be specific.** Experts agree that successful exercisers are the ones who set specific goals – just deciding to 'get fit' or 'do more walking' are not specific enough and won't get done. Try to set goals for specific activities with a distance and a time to achieve it in. You might want to set short-term goals such as being able to walk to the shops and back without being out of breath or being able to play a short game of football with your grandchildren. For the longer term you will want to aim at something more ambitious, such as setting yourself a 12-week challenge to build up to swim 30 lengths or walk 10 km (6 miles) or even do a 5 or 10 km (3 or 6 mile) charity run.
- **Make it achievable.** Be ambitious but realistic. You can always revise your goals if you reach your target very quickly.
- **Give yourself deadlines.** Make sure you give yourself a realistic timeframe to achieve your goal. You may want to break down your goal into more manageable weekly targets.
- **Write yourself a contract.** Write down what you want to achieve and why, how you plan to do it and how other people can help. Make copies of your contract and pin them up around your home. Think about creating a blog or a Facebook post saying what you are aiming for and how you plan to achieve it. Once others know about your plans, it will make it harder to give up, and you'll get other people on board to encourage you.
- **Schedule your exercise.** Book exercise appointments with yourself in your diary or calendar and stick to them; get up 30 minutes earlier, swap 30 minutes of TV for exercise, or get (or borrow) a dog to walk!



## Stay safe

- Build up your exercise programme slowly to reduce the likelihood of injuries.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing and choose the right footwear with a good arch support – especially if you are walking or running.
- Warm up gently before exercising and cool down slowly afterwards to help prevent injury and help your body adapt and recover (see below).
- Always do your stretches on starting and finishing your training.
- Don't overexert yourself; signs of overexertion include nausea, sickness, dizziness, light-headedness and chest pain.
- Don't exercise outside if the weather is too hot or cold or you are unwell.
- Don't eat a big meal before exercise – wait at least one hour after eating before exercising.
- Drink plenty of water.

## 10 top tips on staying motivated

### 1. Vary your routine

Change what you do every six to eight weeks to avoid getting bored and reaching a plateau in your fitness. If you keep doing the same exercise your body will adapt to it, so that it is no longer challenging and your fitness won't improve. For example, if you're walking, include some hills or find a new route; if you are swimming, vary your strokes, or add a completely different type of exercise to your weekly schedule. If you're a gym member, ask your instructor to design you a new programme every three months.

### 2. Find a new challenge

Learning a new skill is always empowering, so if you are feeling more body-confident now why not learn to dance? Ballroom dancing is not just for the celebrities. Alternatively, why not revisit a sport you used to play – perhaps one you were keen on in your school days? Perhaps you used to play tennis but stopped? Find a local club for new people to play with.

### 3. Measure yourself

Waist, hips and bust are the most obvious parts of the body to measure, but you might want to keep track of your upper arm or thigh measurements. Measure your waist to see whether you're losing abdominal fat.



#### **4. Record the changes**

The camera never lies so why not keep 'before' and 'after' pictures pinned up on your fridge to help keep you on track and focused on your exercise regime. Visible evidence of the way your body is changing will help to encourage you to persevere.

#### **5. Just do a little**

When you feel pushed for time or really demotivated just try to do 10 minutes of activity. You're getting some health benefits and you might find that by committing to doing 10 minutes of exercise you end up doing more.

#### **6. Be flexible**

If your exercise bike breaks, don't give up until it's fixed: try something different. If you have less time one week to fit in your exercise sessions try to exercise harder for less time. Life tends to throw lots of things at us and we can't let it derail our good intentions.

#### **7. Monitor your workouts**

If you feel the frequency of your workouts might be slipping, use apps or a simple diary to monitor yourself and to remind you to exercise.

#### **8. Sign up**

Try entering a sponsored swim, run or bike ride. Alternatively sponsor yourself and give a donation to charity when you have achieved a personal fitness goal.

#### **9. Adapt your exercise programme**

If you know you're heading towards a busy month or if you feel your time commitment to exercise is wavering, think about changing your approach and focus on intensity rather than frequency. If you've been exercising at a moderate level, increase the intensity of your workout to a vigorous level and decrease the frequency of your workouts. This way, you're meeting the recommended exercise guidelines in literally half the time.

#### **10. Reward yourself**

Set yourself mini goals every couple of weeks – to walk further, faster, add five minutes to your routine – and give yourself a reward (that's not food or alcohol) when you achieve your goal.