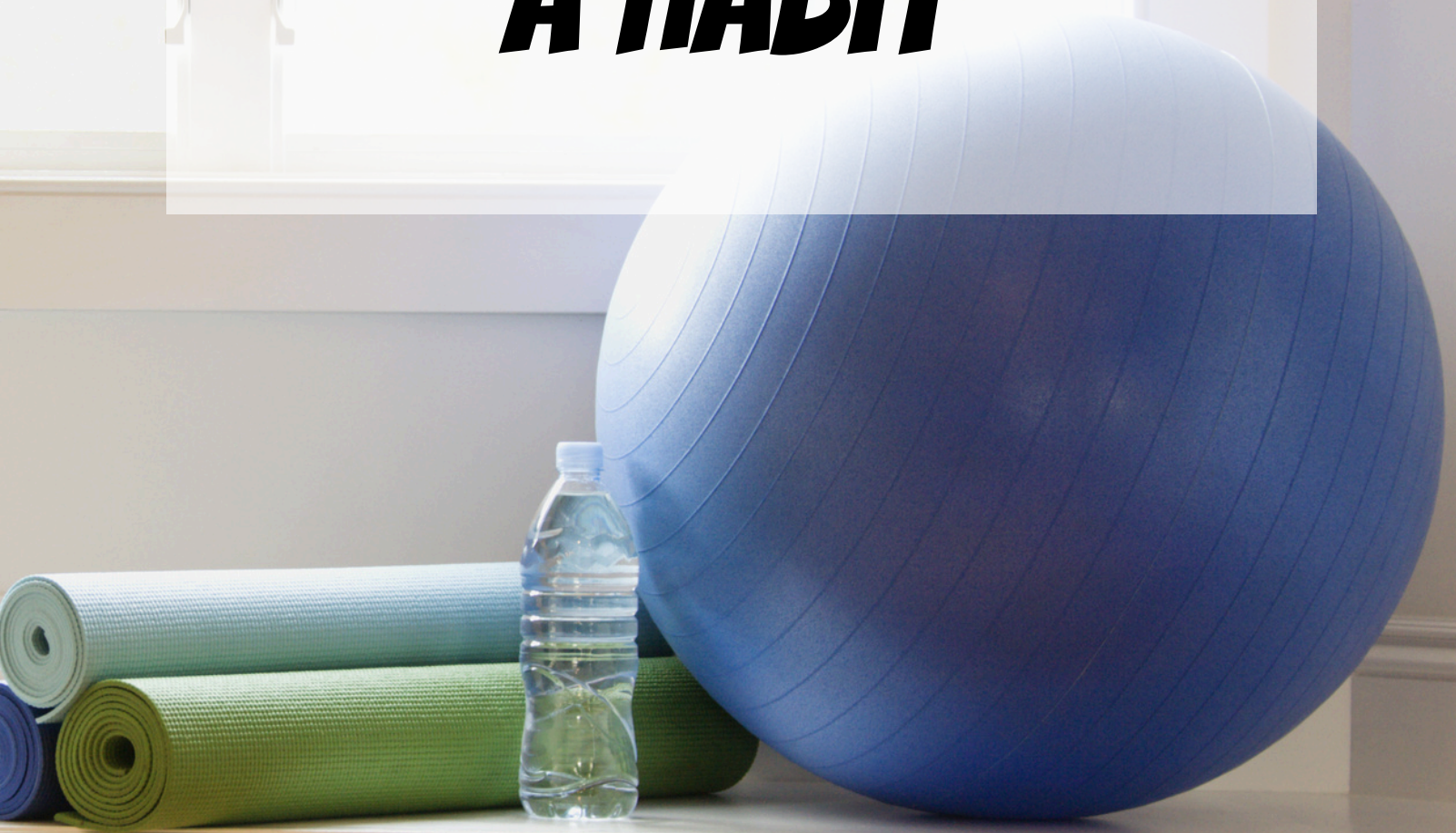


MAKING EXERCISE A HABIT



MAKING EXERCISE A HABIT

What will be covered

- Exercise Recommendations
- Benefits of Regular Exercise
- Common Barriers to Exercise
- Building Healthy Habits
- Tips for Successful Exercising
- Setting SMARTER Goals
- Creating Your Personal Exercise Schedule



Daily Exercise Recommendations

According to the World Health Organization, physical activity is "any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure". Aerobic exercise is exercise that increases your heart rate and requires oxygen. Muscle-strengthening activities include anything that make your muscles work harder than usual. Adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week. These exercise recommendations can be met through either:

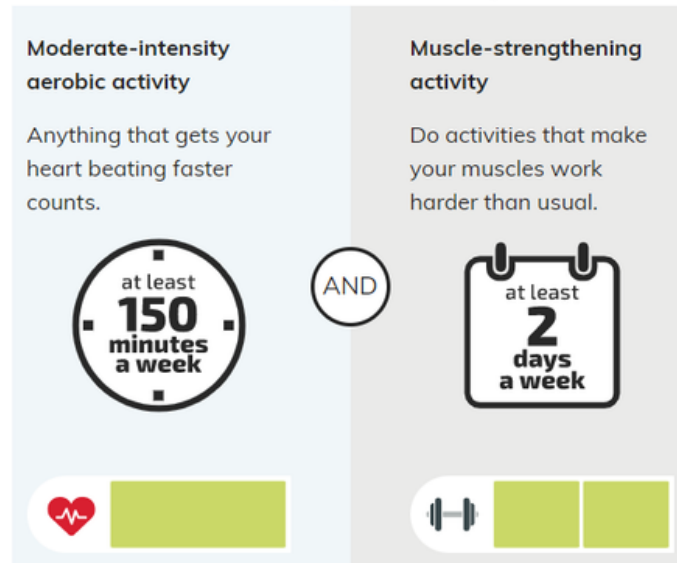
- 30–60 minutes of **moderate-intensity** exercise (5 days per week)
- 20–60 minutes of **vigorous-intensity** exercise (3 days per week)

One continuous session or multiple shorter sessions (of at least 10 minutes) are both acceptable to accumulate the desired amount of daily exercise. You can also do a mix of moderate and vigorous intensity exercise to meet the recommendations.

Moderate-intensity physical activity means working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat while still being able to carry on a conversation. Brisk walking and bicycling are examples. **Vigorous-intensity** physical activity is more strenuous. During vigorous physical activity, it is difficult to comfortably carry on a conversation. Running, basketball, and swimming are examples. It is also recommended that adults participate in **muscle-strengthening activities**, such as weightlifting, at least two times per week.



Adults need a mix of activity to be healthy:



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

How much aerobic exercise do you currently participate in each week? _____

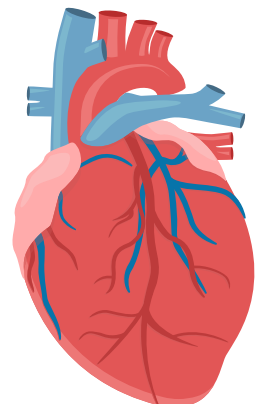
How much time do you spend participating in muscle-strengthening activities each week? ____

What types of aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities do you enjoy doing? _____

Benefits of Regular Exercise

Regular exercise will benefit you in many ways. Here are just a few:

- **Reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and stroke.** Aerobic exercises strengthen the heart and lungs and helps them work more efficiently. It also helps lower your blood pressure and improves blood cholesterol levels.
- **Helps maintain a healthy weight.** A healthy weight looks different for every body, but when you exercise regularly, your specific healthy weight is easier for your body to maintain.
- **Improved sleep quality.** Regular exercise helps you fall asleep faster and increases the amount of deep sleep you get, which leads to a more restful and rejuvenating sleep.
- **Decreased symptoms of depression, stress, and anxiety.** Exercise causes the brain to release serotonin and endorphins, the body's natural pain killers, which can improve your mood and lead to a sense of well-being.
- **Decreased risk of injury.** Exercise strengthens your muscles, bones, tendons, and ligaments. The stronger your bones and muscles become, the less likely you will be to experience certain diseases, such as osteoporosis, as you age. Flexible, strong muscles and joints are less likely to be overstretched and injured.



- **Improved posture.** Stronger muscles and bones leads to improved posture. This can help decrease back pain and prevent muscle imbalances.
- **Reduced risk of some cancers.** Regular physical activity lowers your risk of developing many types of cancer, including breast, prostate, colon, endometrium, and pancreatic cancers. Because exercise also contributes to maintaining a healthy weight, it can help strengthen your immune system and regulate your hormones.
- **Increased energy.** Regular exercise improves both your stamina and your sleep quality, which will give you more energy throughout the day.
- **Increased longevity.** Better health that comes through exercise will increase your chances of living a longer, healthier, happier life!

If you have had previous experience with exercise, what benefits (if any) have you noticed in your own life? _____

Which of the above benefits are the most important to you? _____

Common Barriers to Exercise

Beginning a new exercise program can be difficult for many reasons. Consider the following barriers and circle the ones that you feel apply to you:

Work obligations	School obligations	Lack of time
Low energy	Little motivation	Financial concerns
Social life	Lack of knowledge	No social support
Friends/family have different interests	Fear of injury	Embarrassment/social discomfort

What are some specific things you can do to overcome each of your barriers?

Barrier #1:

Solution:

Barrier #2:

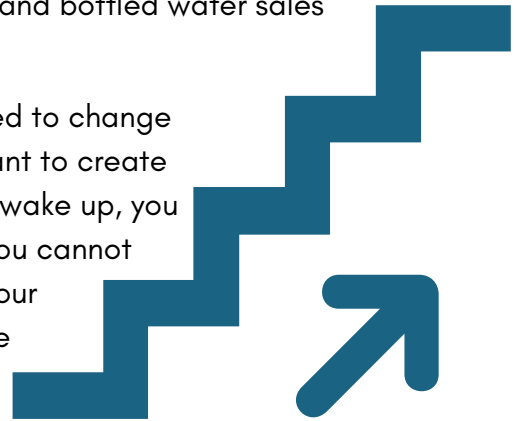
Solution:

Building Healthy Habits

Exercising will not become an easy habit overnight. Building any new habit takes time, patience, and practice. Take it one step at a time. Do not be afraid to experiment to find the strategies that work best for you. Do all you can to set yourself up for success.

In his bestselling book, *Atomic Habits*, James Clear described a study done by a physician in a hospital cafeteria in which she made water available at every drink station in the cafeteria, including the refrigerators next to the cash register which had previously only held soda. She also placed baskets of bottled water in several easily accessible locations throughout the hospital. After 3 months, soda sales dropped by 11.4% and bottled water sales increased by 25.8%.

If you want to change your behavior, you will probably need to change something about your environment. For example, if you want to create the habit of exercising for 30 minutes each day when you wake up, you may need to set your phone away from your bed so that you cannot turn off your alarm in your sleep. Or consider setting out your exercise clothes the night before to remind you to exercise when you wake up.



James Clear identified 5 steps for creating new habits:

1. **Start with an incredibly small habit.** If your goal is to exercise for 30 minutes a day first thing in the morning, start by setting an alarm before you go to bed or going to bed 30 minutes earlier each night so that you will have the energy to get up in the mornings.
2. **Increase your habit in very small ways.** Aim to be 1% better at your new habit each day. Remember to start small. This will increase your motivation and willpower. Consider setting out your exercise clothes the night before as the next step.
3. **As you build up, break habits into chunks.** Keep your habits reasonable. If you are not exercising at all right now, choose only one or two days of the week to exercise at first.
4. **When you slip, get back on track quickly.** If you do not exercise one day during the week, don't sweat it! Start again the next day. Focus on consistency, not perfection. Flexibility is important, too.
5. **Be patient. Stick to a pace you can sustain.** Your new habits should feel easy. If they are hard to maintain, you are probably trying to change too much at once. Only start exercising three mornings a week after two has become easy.

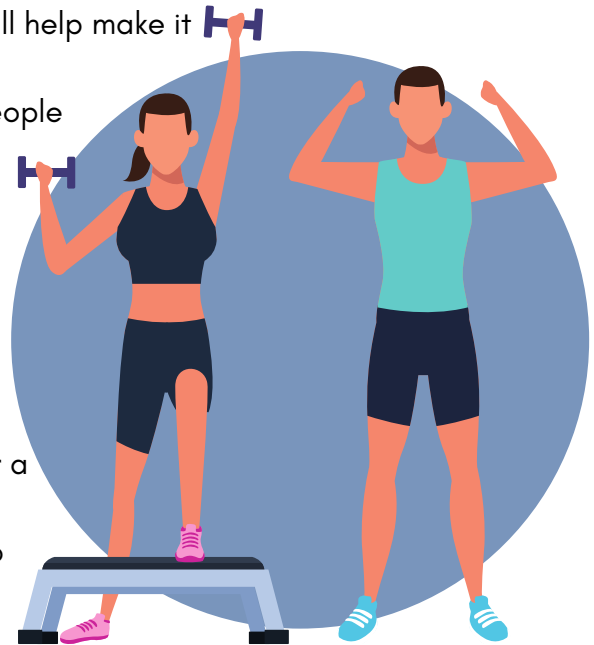
What strategies have you found to be helpful in the past when it comes to building new habits or breaking old ones? _____



Tips for Successful Exercising

Exercising will get easier the longer and more consistently you do it. Just remember that what works for someone else is not necessarily what will work best for you. Don't be afraid to experiment and/or change your strategy if you find that it is not working for you!

- **Start small, start slow, and start where you are.** Doing too much too fast can lead to injury, burnout, and discouragement. Do not compare your first day of exercising to someone else's one hundredth day of exercising. If you currently only exercise once a week, try exercising twice a week. If your workouts are normally 30 minutes, try increasing a few of them to 40 minutes.
- **Schedule a consistent time for exercise.** Scheduling your exercise at the same time each day will make it more likely that it will become a habit and less likely that other things will get in the way. Having it on your schedule will help make it a priority.
- **Choose the best time of day for you.** Some people find it easier to exercise in the mornings, others have more energy during the afternoons or evenings. Consider how close to meals you want to schedule your exercise, the temperature and climate, and your sleep schedule. Exercising too close to bedtime can make it more difficult to fall asleep.
- **Find activities that you enjoy doing.** Going for a run or going to the gym are not the only forms of exercise. Find activities that make you excited to exercise, that motivate you, and that reasonably challenge you.
- **Get an exercise buddy.** Exercising with a friend or family member can make exercising more fun and will help keep you motivated and accountable. Find someone who will support and encourage you in your exercise goals.
- **Vary your routine.** To avoid boredom and injury, participate in a variety of activities and exercises. Exercising the same muscles in the same way too much can lead to injury. Varying your activities will help you strengthen all of your muscles.
- **Don't forget to rest.** Rest is necessary to let your body recover and grow stronger after a workout. Be committed to your goals and plans, but learn to differentiate between everyday fatigue and the type of fatigue that will make you more susceptible to injury. For example, feeling sleepy in the afternoon is probably not normally a good reason to skip your exercise time, but pain or intense muscle soreness might be an indicator that your body needs more time to recover.
- **Do not get discouraged.** Creating any new habit takes time, effort, and practice, but it is worth it and you can do it!



Setting SMARTER Goals

Ask yourself these questions when setting and working towards your own exercise goals.



Specific

Can I define the who, what, when, where, why, and which of my goal?



Measurable

How will I track my progress and measure the outcome?



Achievable

Is this a reasonable and realistic goal?



Relevant

Is this goal meaningful to me?



Time-Bound

By what date will I accomplish this goal?



Evaluate

Is this goal working for me? Is it producing the results I hoped it would?



Revise

What do I need to change about my goal to make it SMARTER?

Your Goals

1. _____

2. _____

Creating Your Personal Exercise Schedule

Using the exercise log and all of the principles from this program, you are ready to create an exercise plan. Remember to make it realistic and find what works for you. Don't be afraid to adjust your goals and plans if something is not working the way you want it to!

Sources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Mayo Clinic
- American College of Sports Medicine
- National Academy of Sports Medicine
- United States Department of Health and Human Services
- American Heart Association
- World Health Organization
- *Atomic Habits* by James Clear

