

October 2023



Musculoskeletal  
Health

# Let's get moving!

Regular exercise has significant health benefits, yet more than 80% of American adults do not get enough physical activity. Experts recommend 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise each week, along with two strength-training sessions, however, even a small amount of physical activity is better than none. If you find yourself sitting more and moving less, consider these tips:

## Start small.

If you are starting from scratch or resuming your exercise routine after a long break, try to keep your progress slow and steady to avoid injury. Instead of sprinting, consider five minutes of walking or 30 seconds of jogging. This is not the time to compare yourself to others, so focus on your personal goals.

## Keep it simple.

You don't need fancy equipment or a gym membership to be physically active. You can walk around the neighborhood, walk up and down the stairs, or have a living room dance party. There are also creative ways you can add small movements throughout your day. For example, try to sit down and stand back up ten times before lounging on the couch to watch TV. The goal is to add more movement than you were doing before.

## Stay motivated.

Reward yourself when you meet your physical activity goal for the day, week, month, or beyond. Treat yourself to small rewards for meeting daily movement goals. Small treats can include a bubble bath or spending more time doing something you love. Indulge in a bigger splurge when you meet a goal that took weeks or months to achieve.

Working out with others can also help you stay motivated.

Consider meeting a friend for an exercise session or joining a workout class. It can help you stay motivated when you hold each other accountable.

## Schedule an appointment with yourself.

Instead squeezing exercise into your calendar after everything else has been scheduled, make it a recurring part of your schedule. Add it to your calendar, and then hold yourself to it.

## Have fun!

Find an activity that you enjoy. Exercise does not need to feel like punishment to be effective. If it gets your heart rate up and makes you smile, you're much more likely to continue doing it.

## Get help.

Consider talking to a physical therapist if you can't figure out where to start or if you're worried about injury. Physical therapists are movement experts who can help you overcome barriers that prevent you from achieving your physical activity goals.



## The musculoskeletal system

The musculoskeletal system helps you stand, sit, walk, run, and move. Adult bodies have 206 bones and more than 600 muscles connected by ligaments, tendons, and soft tissues.

The parts of the musculoskeletal system are:



**Bones:** Bones support your body, protect organs and tissues, store calcium and fat, and produce blood cells. Bones provide structure and form for your body.



**Cartilage:** A type of connective tissue, cartilage cushions bones inside your joints. Firm, rubbery cartilage protects bones from rubbing against each other.



**Joints:** Bones come together to form joints. Some joints have a large range of motion, such as the ball-and-socket shoulder joint. Other joints, like the knee, allow bones to move back and forth but not rotate.



**Muscles:** Each muscle is made of thousands of stretchy fibers. Your muscles allow you to move, sit upright, and stay still.



**Ligaments:** Made of tough collagen fibers, ligaments connect bones and help stabilize joints.



**Tendons:** Tendons connect muscles to bones. Tendons are tough but not very stretchy.

Sources: [APTA.org](https://www.apta.org), [ACSM.org](https://www.acsm.org), [ClevelandClinic.org](https://www.clevelandclinic.org)

Consult your healthcare provider before beginning a new activity program.

## Injury and pain

### I started a new physical activity program, and now I hurt! Am I injured?

Starting a new exercise routine pushes your body to do more than what it is used to. This healthy stress often results in muscle soreness and fatigue, which is a sign that your body is repairing and becoming stronger. Muscle soreness typically peaks between 24-72 hours after exercise. This is referred to as delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS). Total rest is not recommended when experiencing DOMS, because it can make you feel more sore. Light activity such as walking and stretching can be very helpful in getting through this period of soreness.

### What is the difference between muscle pain/strain and muscle soreness?

It is true that soreness is uncomfortable, and some consider it a type of pain. But not all pain means an injury occurred. If you recently started to experience pain after beginning a new exercise program or progressing a current one, consider whether your symptoms are due to muscle soreness before assuming you have an injury.

Muscle soreness is often described as muscles feeling tender to the touch and having a burning, tight, or aching feeling when you perform movements that use those



muscles. Light activity can help reduce the soreness temporarily, but symptoms should subside on their own after two or three days.

Pain may also be felt during exercise or within 24 hours after exercise, but it can be constant and present at rest as well as during activity. Pain can be described as aching, burning, stabbing, or sharp. It may not go away without treatment. Physical therapy can be highly effective for acute and chronic pain.

If you feel your pain is extreme or if it lasts more than 10 days, make an appointment with your doctor or physical therapist. Physical therapists can evaluate your pain without an order from your provider. Check with your insurance provider to make sure physical therapy is covered.

Source: APTA.org

## Additional resources

Find examples and videos of 15-minute workouts in [this article](#).

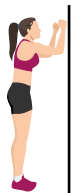
Read [this article](#) to learn more about muscle recovery.

Use [this tool](#) to find healthy recipes to fuel your body.

By clicking on these links, you will be leaving this website and will be directed to third-party sites. These links are provided for informational purposes only.

## Keep yourself moving

Consider incorporating these exercises into your daily routine. Always consult your healthcare provider before beginning a new exercise routine.



**Wall Planks** – Put your forearms flat against a wall while tightening the core and keeping a straight line from the top of your head through your heels. Hold for 60 seconds.



**Hip Flexor Stretch** – From a kneeling position, keeping an upright torso, shift your weight forward until you feel a stretch in the front of the leg with the knee on the ground. Hold for five to 10 seconds and repeat three to five times on each side.



**Standing T's** – Start with arms in front, fully extended. With palms facing up, rotate your arms and squeeze your shoulder blades together ending in the T position. Make sure to stand tall and keep an upright posture throughout the movement.