



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by Lawley



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO STARTING A REALISTIC EXERCISE ROUTINE

Regular exercise is one of the best things you can do for yourself. It can improve your overall health, help you manage your weight, prevent adverse health outcomes and boost your mental health. Unfortunately, only 1 in 4 people get enough exercise, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Many adults cite busy schedules as a reason regular exercise isn't feasible. However, getting enough exercise often comes down to prioritizing movement and getting a bit creative with planning. This article explores common exercises and tips for getting started with a realistic routine.

Understanding Types of Exercise

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that adults engage in moderate-intensity aerobic activity for at least 150 minutes each week and muscle-strengthening activities two times per week. It may seem like a lot at first, but if you break it down, that's 30 minutes of exercise five times a week.

There are so many ways to move your body, so knowing where to start may be overwhelming. Here are some common types of exercise:

- **Aerobic**—Aerobic exercise is any type of cardiovascular conditioning or “cardio” and is key in any fitness program. Common cardio activities include brisk walking, running, jump roping, biking, dancing and swimming.

- **Bootcamp**—Typically time-based, bootcamp workouts are comprised of high-intensity circuits that combine aerobic and strength exercises.
- **Calisthenics**—These exercises are generally performed without gym equipment and rely on your body weight. Examples include lunges, squats, pullups, pushups and situps.
- **Flexibility**—Yoga and stretching are examples of movements that can aid in muscle recovery, your range of motion and injury prevention.
- **High-intensity interval training**—Also known as HIIT, this format includes repetitions of short bursts of high- and low-intensity exercises.
- **Sports**—Sports like pickleball, tennis, golf and volleyball can be a fun way to get moving.
- **Strength training**—These exercises aim to increase muscular strength and endurance. Strength training examples include weightlifting and resistance training.

These activities can be done on their own or may be combined. It comes down to finding what works best for your body and goals and what is the most fun for you.

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Incorporating Exercise Into Your Regular Routine

You likely already know that you're supposed to be physically active but may find it challenging to get started. Consider these tips for starting a realistic exercise routine that will stick:

- **Start sensibly.** Begin with short exercise sessions and slowly increase your time and workout difficulty. If you overdo it, you may experience muscle soreness, become discouraged and quit. For example, rather than trying to run three miles on your first day, begin by walking or running a mile and increasing your distance as your fitness level improves.
- **Consider a personal trainer.** Everyone's body and goals are different, and a personal trainer can help you create an individualized plan. This option could require an investment, but the benefits may be worth it.
- **Remember to warm up and cool down.** To prevent injuries, it's essential to warm up your body before jumping into a workout. It's equally important to leave a couple of minutes at the end of your workout to cool down, helping your body return to its normal state.
- **Listen to your body.** Remember that feeling dizzy or ill is your body's way of telling you that you are working too hard. If this happens, take a break or stop your workout for the day. It's also OK to skip workouts if you aren't feeling well. Give yourself permission to take care of yourself and get back into it when you've recovered.
- **Find the right pace.** Exercise should be fairly comfortable for you. Your pace should be just below where you start to breathe quickly. Exercising at this pace produces two desirable results: It mobilizes fat burning and helps you develop endurance.
- **Choose a fun workout.** Find an activity you enjoy and incorporate it into your routine. You're more likely to stick with the workouts if you enjoy doing them. The same can be said for sticking with the workouts you are good at. If you're confident in your actions, you're more likely to keep with them.
- **Schedule workouts.** Put your workouts on your calendar just as you would any other appointment. If something comes up and you have to change an appointment, reschedule your workout right away.
- **Move when your energy is the highest.** You may see the best results when working out during your peak hours. Some people also have success working out in the morning, getting it out of the way before other things may come up during the day.
- **Break it up.** You don't have to do everything all at once, and multiple short exercise sessions may fit your schedule better. If needed, focus on staying active throughout the day.
- **Stay hydrated.** Maintaining hydration is critical, so drink plenty of fluids throughout the day.
- **Build exercise into your work routine.** If feasible, walk or bike to work. If the distance is not realistic, consider ways to get extra steps in during the day, such as parking your vehicle a distance from the office, taking the stairs inside the workplace or going for a lunchtime walk in the neighborhood.
- **Take advantage of the weekend.** You may feel you have more free time on the weekend or your days off from work. Being a weekend warrior is OK; you can fit in 150 minutes of exercise on Saturdays and Sundays. This will still help you prioritize movement, avoid a sedentary lifestyle and stick to a fitness routine. The next step is considering ways to keep moving during the rest of the week.
- **Exercise with a friend.** Companionship can make it more fun, so work out with a friend or loved one to make it more enjoyable or help you stick to the routine.

When ready, put your plan on paper, including attainable steps and goals. You can always build upon it as your fitness endurance improves.

If you don't have a specific goal, such as running a 5K, holding a plank for 15 seconds or increasing muscle mass, then commit to moderate physical activity and discover how to build it into your daily routine.

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Before you start working out, visit your doctor for a checkup and to discuss your desire to incorporate more exercise into your daily routine. This visit can also help you develop a plan with realistic goals.