

Choose an Exercise Plan

Although many people attempt to lose weight through dieting alone, research clearly shows that your long-term success depends on also getting regular exercise.

In a recent study of participants who have lost more than 2 stone and maintained that weight loss for at least one year, almost 90% of dieters who lose the weight and keep it off do so with a combination of diet and exercise; only 10% use diet alone and 1% rely on exercise alone.

Exercise has many benefits:

- **Exercise helps you stick to your diet**
When you exercise, you say to yourself, *I'm serious about losing weight and getting in shape ...I'm determined to succeed, once and for all*
- **Exercise helps control appetite**
- **Exercise boosts mood and soothes stress**
If you tend to eat in response to anxiety, frustration, and other negative emotions, exercise can provide a productive outlet
- **Exercise burns calories**
During exercise your muscles burn calories at a faster rate than usual to power your movement. You also continue to burn calories at a slightly faster rate after a workout as your body recovers and rebuilds your muscle
- **Exercise preserves muscle tissue**
Usually, as you lose weight, you lose a combination of fat and muscle tissue. But exercise helps to preserve muscle tissue, so most of your weight loss comes from fat tissue
- **Exercise builds confidence**
As you increase your fitness, you're likely to feel better about yourself and your abilities
- **Exercise makes you feel better physically**
The more you move the more you feel like moving. Regular exercise strengthens your lungs, heart and other muscles. Daily activities like carrying groceries and walking up stairs will feel less taxing. Because exercise can improve sleep, you might find that you have more energy
- **Exercise improves your health and helps prevent disease.**
Studies have found a correlation between regular exercise and a reduced risk for heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer

How to Start

If you're not already doing so, you should engage in two kinds of exercise:

- ✓ **Spontaneous Exercise:** Taking advantage of situations you're in to get more exercise
- ✓ **Planned Exercise:** Setting a specific time to do a specific kind of exercise. Before starting an exercise program, check with your health-care provider, GP etc as they will take your current state of health into consideration and can make suggestions or confirm that your choices are appropriate for you.

Spontaneous Exercise

You can start incorporating spontaneous exercise into your day right now.

From today on, do the following:

- Always try to arrive at your destination ahead of time, so you can get off the bus or park far away and walk the extra distance
- When you take an elevator, get off on the floor below your destination and walk up a flight of stairs. Over time you might get off two flights early, then three flights and so on.
- If you live in a two-story house, don't let things that need to be taken to another floor pile up; take each up right away
- When you go to a shopping centre, walk a full circuit before you start shopping.
- To motivate yourself to do more spontaneous exercise, consider attaching a pedometer to your belt so you can track how many steps you walk each day

Planned Exercise:

Since exercising is not optional if you want to lose weight, be sure to choose a form of exercise that you like and can stick with. Here are just a few ideas:

- Take a daily walk or run
- Exercise to a fitness DVD
- Get involved in a sport
- Get a personal trainer
- Participate in an exercise class like Yoga/Pilates
- Try a dance class like Zumba
- Join a gym
- Swim lengths or do aqua aerobics

No matter what form of planned exercise you choose, start out at a reasonable level. It's not realistic to go from doing nothing to exercising 30 minutes a day. You'll just get sore muscles or possibly injure yourself – then you're likely to give up exercising completely.

Remind yourself that even five minutes is better than ZERO minutes!

Common Exercise Problems – Excuses

Problem: *I have small children who need constant supervision*

Solutions: Exercise at a gym that offers child care. Swap babysitting with another parent. Exercise with your children to a family fitness DVD, ride bikes or walk. Exercise to a fitness DVD while your children play nearby.

Problem: *I have physical limitations*

Solutions: Many people can swim or take water fitness class. Others need to start with physical therapy or Pilates. Check with your GP or specialist to get suggestions for your individual case.

Problem: *I don't have enough time*

Solutions: Schedule exercise into your daily planner. Consider which daily activities you can decrease or eliminate to make time for exercise. Consider getting up earlier and starting your day with exercise. Make exercise an essential activity, not an optional one.

Finalise Your Exercise Plan

If you currently exercise fewer than three times a week, your goal for today is to establish a more frequent exercise routine. Make arrangements to begin a planned exercise program as soon as possible. Meanwhile, set a time to take a walk every day – even if you can only do five minutes. Also think of all the different ways you can work spontaneous exercise into each day. Write down your plan so you'll feel accountable.

What are you thinking?

You might be having sabotaging thoughts about exercising. If so these responses may help.

Sabotaging Thought: I don't want to exercise

Helpful Response: I shouldn't go by whether I want to exercise or not. If I want to lose weight and keep it off, *I need to exercise*. There are also lots of other benefits to exercising. I might be making this into a much bigger deal than it really is. I can do this

Sabotaging Thought: What's the use of walking for only five minutes?

Helpful Response: Walking for five minutes is better than walking for *zero* minutes. Exercise is essential, even if I don't do very much at first. I can build up the amount that I do over time, but I have to start somewhere

Sabotaging Thought: I'm too busy to exercise

Helpful Response: I have to make exercise a priority. If I needed to exercise each day to stay alive, I'd find the time. I might have to get up earlier in the morning to fit it in, but I shouldn't fool myself into thinking that exercise is optional

Set a Realistic Goal

Setting a goal for yourself can be a great motivator – but you can easily become overwhelmed if you set a goal that seems too daunting or will take too long to achieve. Don't fall into that trap. What is your goal?

- **To get to a certain weight**
- **To fit into a particular size of clothing**
- **To look the way you looked when you were younger**

It's natural to want to set a long-term goal. In reality though, we don't yet know whether or not your goal is reasonable for you. I also don't want you to become anxious thinking how far you have to go. Instead, I'd like you to set a short-term goal to lose 5 pounds.

You probably want to lose more than that, so once you lose 5 pounds, set a new goal to lose a further 5 pounds and so on. Each time you hit that target, celebrate and give yourself credit/reward.

Now, let's talk about the rate at which you should try to lose weight. Although you probably don't want to hear this, the answer is the slower the better. During the first couple of weeks, you might lose several pounds but you probably won't continue to lose at this rate so don't get discouraged. There is no long-term benefit to losing weight too quickly. And there is a major disadvantage: when you suddenly decrease the amount of food that you eat, your body responds in a protective manner by slowing your metabolism. It's your body's natural response to protect you from starvation.

Weight-loss specialists agree that your goal should be to lose no more than 1 to 2 pounds a week. But it's fine if you lose only half a pound a week on average.

What are you thinking?

Sabotaging Thought: Losing only 1 to 2 pounds a week is much too slow!

Helpful Response: How much will it matter a few years from now how long it took? I need to remind myself why it's important to lose weight slowly. My long-term success depends on it