

Physical Activity and Exercise Safety

Your personal safety must always be a top priority when doing moderate to vigorous types of physical activity. Always consult with your physician or health care provider before beginning any physical activity program. The following information summarizes what you need to do before, during, and after physical activity in order to protect yourself from injury.

1. Dress appropriately

- Your clothing should fit comfortably and be made of breathable fabric.
- Your shoes should be comfortable and provide good foot and ankle support.

2. Regular activity

- Daily physical activity for at least 30 minutes will keep your body energized and at a healthy fitness level.
- Regular activity also will reduce the risk of sprains and strains from overexertion.

3. Progression

- If you have not been doing regular physical activity, begin with a light routine and gradually increase the intensity and duration of your activities as your fitness improves.
- Divide your daily routine into 10- to 15-minute physical activity breaks and slowly increase the time as you become more active.

4. Balance

- Engage in a variety of physical activities that include stretching, strength training, and aerobic fitness.
- Doing a variety of activities will ensure your whole body benefits from being physically active. A variety of activities also will reduce boredom and give you many options for sharing physical activity time with friends and family members.

5. Always warm-up

- Do 3 to 5 minutes of easy aerobic activity, such as jogging-in-place or light walking, to gradually increase your heart rate, breathing, and circulation.

- Do slow joint rotation exercises, such as arm circles and ankle rotations, to gradually increase the range of motion of your joints. Work each major joint for 10 seconds.
- Begin the activity slowly and gradually increase your intensity.

6. Always cool down

- Never suddenly stop, especially when doing vigorous exercise. Gradually decrease your activity over a 3- to 5-minute period.
- If you are running, gradually reduce the intensity to light jogging. If you are walking vigorously, gradually reduce the intensity to a casual pace.
- Complete a variety of stretches to maintain and improve your flexibility. Hold stretches for 15 to 20 seconds. Be careful not to overstretch your muscles.

7. Drink plenty of water

- Avoid dehydration by drinking plenty of water before, during, and after your activity.

8. Allow plenty of time between the time you eat and the time you do physical activity

- Make sure you allow at least 1 hour between the time you eat and the time you begin your physical activity.
- The meal you eat should be light and easily digestible. You should avoid eating foods that are high in fat, protein or fiber, as well as foods known to be gas-forming.

Examples of foods to eat before doing physical activity are fruit, bagels, and cereal.

9. Monitor your intensity level during the activity (See the following table)

LIGHT EFFORT	MODERATE EFFORT	VIGOROUS EFFORT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light walking • Washing the car • Easy gardening • Hide and seek • Light dancing • Stretching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brisk walking • Bicycling • Raking leaves • Swimming • Dancing • Water aerobics • Hiking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed walking • Aerobics • Jogging • Soccer • Basketball • Fast swimming • Fast dancing • Fast biking
Self-monitoring questions: How does it feel? How warm am I? What is my breathing like?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start to feel warm • Slight increase in breathing rate and heart rate • Able to talk and laugh comfortably 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling warmer, lightly perspiring • Faster breathing rate and heart rate • Able to talk without being out of breath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quite warm, perspiring • Fast breathing rate and heart rate • Able to talk a little bit without being out of breath

10. If you experience any of the following symptoms, STOP doing the physical activity

- Chest discomfort
- Nausea
- Sudden shortness of breath
- Lightheadedness
- Dizziness or irregular heart beat
- Sharp or significant joint or muscle pain

Consult your health care provider if any of these symptoms occur.

11. Always take care of your personal safety

- Walk or jog with a partner in a well lit and safe area.