



## Get-in-shape tips

Want to get into shape, but don't know where or how to start? Start out on the right foot by considering these simple tips:

- ▶ **Consult your doctor.** This will give you a chance to get a physical if needed. Your doctor also may help you craft an exercise routine that is least likely to aggravate any medical conditions or physical limitations you might have.
- ▶ **Keep your goals realistic.** If you are just starting a walking program, don't expect to be an Olympic speed walker by the end of the week. If all you realistically can achieve is walking for 20 minutes twice a week, then make that your goal for now. Be willing to adjust your goal as you go. If you overdo it and push yourself by running when all that you are really ready for is walking, then you're just setting yourself up for failure or even injury. Success is motivating, so set a goal that you know you can reach.
- ▶ **Set short-term goals.** If becoming a lean, mean fitness machine is your goal, it can be discouraging to find your endurance and strength are not yet where you hope to be. Instead of dreaming of athletic excellence right away, aim for small achievements such as increasing every other workout by one to two minutes (until you reach at least 30 minutes total). Or aim to increase your flexibility so you can reach your toes more comfortably by your next birthday. Once you reach one short-term fitness goal, then set another one, such as adding two more reps (at the same weight) or five more pounds to each exercise in your strength-training program. Of course, make sure your doctor agrees that the kind and amount of exercise you do is right for you.
- ▶ **Make it complete.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that adults should try to exercise most days of the week and preferably every day. The Center also states that adults should strive to meet either of the following physical activity goals:
  - **Do moderate-intensity activity** (such as brisk walking, gardening) for at least 30 minutes on 5 or more days of the week
  - **Get vigorous-intensity activity** (such as running) on 3 or more days of the week for 20 or more minutes each time

- ▶ **Drink up.** How much fluid you should drink depends upon the type and intensity of the exercise you are doing, as well as such variables as your individual metabolic rate, body mass, size, and the environmental conditions. As a rule, drink 4 to 12 ounces of fluid for every 20 minutes of exercise. Drink before and after exercise as well. Don't wait until you're thirsty to start drinking. Thirst is a sign that your body has already been without fluids for a while.
- ▶ **Up the intensity.** As your body gets used to a particular exercise, your strength and endurance will increase. To stay challenged and to progress toward your goals, gradually increase the intensity of your workout. If you are a beginner who usually walks for 20 minutes three times a week, consider increasing the duration or frequency of your walks or walk faster and swing your arms. For strength training, add one or two pounds every few weeks, increase your repetitions or sets, or reduce or eliminate the rest period between sets. In general, you should lift a weight until you cannot complete any more repetitions using proper form.
- ▶ **Listen to your body.** A burning sensation in your muscles or fatigue is normal during exercise; sharp pain is not. If you feel pain, stop exercising at once. Then consult a doctor if pain persists for more than a day or two.
- ▶ **Reward yourself.** Whenever you meet a short- or long-term goal, do something nice for yourself. For example, buy that new CD you've been pining for. (Don't reward yourself with an ice cream sundae, of course.)
- ▶ **Have fun.** Vary your workouts so you don't get bored. Find forms of exercise that you truly enjoy, such as jogging through the park if you love nature or ballroom dancing if you love romance.

For more information on getting in shape  
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<https://healthatoz.myuhc.com/portal/Atoz/common/standard/transform.jsp?requestURI=/portal/Atoz/hl/fit/star/shapetips.jsp>, accessed 3/2/10

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