

Fitness

The play by play on getting active

Getting prepped

You may be getting in shape for the first time, or maybe you're making changes to your current workout. To make a fitness plan that's right for you, identify your goals and think about your lifestyle.

- What are your main goals? You may want to write them down.
- Is there anything standing in the way of achieving your goals (health, job, responsibilities, emotional issues)?

Your fitness routine has to fit in your daily life and the demands on your time – otherwise it may be hard to keep up over time. Create a fitness plan that will:

- Fit in with your lifestyle and responsibilities.
- Be fun.
- Relieve stress – not cause it!
- Be something you can stick with.



If your office has a gym, think about working out before or after work, or during lunch. You can also walk outside during your break or ride your bicycle to work. If you're doing shift work, try to exercise when you wake up. It can take up to 6 hours for your body temperature to drop after exercise, and falling body temperatures help us sleep.*

Can you get up early and do a fitness DVD before your kids wake up, or can you do yoga once they go to bed?

It can be hard to work out regularly when you have busy kids or babies with irregular sleep schedules. But the time you spend on fitness is an investment in your future health.

* WebMD website: *Exercise Helps You Sleep* (accessed August 2015); webmd.com.

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Kick-off better health with these moves¹

Quick drills

Don't have an hour to spend at the gym each day? There are lots of other ways to squeeze in fitness. Experts recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week to maintain a healthy weight, reduce your risk of chronic disease and keep your body strong.² That's less than half an hour each day!

It's ok to break up your workouts.

"Short bouts of cardio over the course of the day are just as beneficial as one long segment."

Lani Muelrath Fitness expert and author of *Fit Quickies*

Break it up

Take a brisk 10-minute walk at least 3 times a day. You can walk in the morning, during your breaks or in the evening. If you work in an office, these quick walks can give you energy and make you even more productive!

Take a TV timeout

Get up during TV commercials to dance or march in place. This is a perfect time to do lunges, pushups or squats! Even if you use a digital video recorder (DVR), pause at the commercial breaks and do 10 pushups, 10 squats and 10 lunges – then fast forward!

Move with your kids

Walk your children to school or the bus stop, or take a bike ride together. Play tag, head to the playground, go swimming or host an indoor family dance party. Put on a fun, energizing playlist and get moving to better health.

Walk as you talk

When you're on the phone, pace around the house or walk around your work area in the office.

Leave the car behind

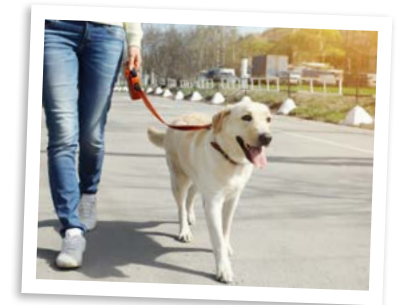
When you have time and don't have a lot to carry, run errands to the store, bank or post office on foot or bicycle.

Partner with your pet

Enjoy time for a long walk with your dog.

Circle the mall or grocery store

Make a big loop inside the mall or grocery store before you shop. This is especially helpful when the weather is bad.



¹ Be sure to check with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: *How much physical activity do adults need?* (accessed July 2015): cdc.gov.

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Ready to go?
Here's a walking plan to get you started.

Four weeks to better fitness

The winning strategy for losing weight is to make gradual changes that become part of your permanent lifestyle, including exercising, cardio and strength training, and diet changes. To give you a jump start on these positive health changes, try this easy walking routine.

But first, make sure you choose the right gear and clothing. Wear moisture-wicking fabrics made especially for exercising, and invest in a good pair of walking shoes. If you plan to walk after dark, wear bright colors or reflective clothing.

When you walk at night, make sure to follow a well-lit route and let someone know where you're going. Keep your music very low or consider leaving your earbuds behind. Always trust your instincts - if you feel uneasy about walking in a certain area, don't do it.



Week 1

Goal: Start with just 3 days of walking

Monday: Walk 20 to 30 min
Tuesday: Rest
Wednesday: Walk 20 to 30 min
Thursday: Rest
Friday: Walk 20 to 30 min
Saturday: Rest
Sunday: Rest



Week 2

Goal: Add more days and more time each day

Monday: Walk 30 to 40 min
Tuesday: Walk 30 to 40 min
Wednesday: Walk 30 to 40 min
Thursday: Walk 30 to 40 min
Friday: Walk 30 to 40 min
Saturday: Walk 30 to 40 min
Sunday: Rest



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Week 3

Goal: Add more time each day

- Monday:** Walk 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Tuesday:** Walk 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Wednesday:** Walk 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Thursday:** Walk 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Friday:** Walk 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Saturday:** Walk 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Sunday:** Rest



Week 4

Goal: Add intervals on 3 days

- Monday:** Walk 1 hour
- Tuesday:** Walk 1 hour with intervals
- Wednesday:** Walk 1 hour
- Thursday:** Walk 1 hour with intervals
- Friday:** Walk 1 hour
- Saturday:** Walk 1 hour with intervals
- Sunday:** Rest



Add intervals: Walk quickly or jog for 2 minutes, then walk normally for 2 minutes.

For faster results: Add strength moves 2 to 3 days a week. Follow the “Exercises to tone your body” and “20-minute circuit training” workouts!

Track your progress with a fitness app or this [printable workout log](#).

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Exercises to tone your body

Strength training builds your muscles to help you perform everyday tasks like climbing steps and carrying heavy items. Toning your arms, abdominals and legs doesn't require a lot of equipment or time. Use these body-weight moves to train anywhere!

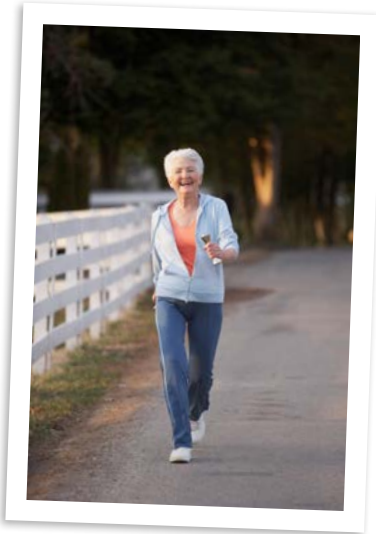
Here are two solid game plans to make you stronger:

Beginners

Just starting? Shape up with 3 simple moves.

Warm up

Make sure to get your body ready by taking a brisk walk or marching in place for about 5 minutes before you start. Swing your arms while you walk or march to get the blood flowing.



Wall push-up

Works your chest and triceps

1. Stand 3 feet away from the wall with your feet slightly apart. Put your hands on the wall with your pointer fingers and thumbs of your opposite hands touching.
2. Bend your elbows and lower yourself toward the wall until your nose almost touches it. Straighten your elbows and push yourself back up slowly until you're standing straight. Do this 10 to 15 times.

Squat

Works your lower body

1. Stand tall with your feet shoulder-width apart and your arms straight out in front of you.
2. Bend your knees and push your hips back to lower your body until your thighs are parallel to the floor (or as far as you can go). Be careful not to round your back or extend your knees past your toes.
3. Straighten your knees and push yourself back up slowly until you're standing straight. Do this 10 to 15 times.

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Plank

Works your abdominals, back and shoulders

1. Start in push-up position on the floor with your arms straight and your body in a line from head to ankles. Tighten your abdominals and hold up to a minute. As you get stronger, increase your hold time by 15-second increments. Lower your body to the floor.
2. Make it easier by bending your elbows and lowering yourself onto your forearms. Tighten your abdominals and hold for up to a minute.

Try to do 3 sets of each move 3 times a week. If you want to make it more competitive, start a challenge with your friends and family. Copy and paste these moves into an email and let the fun begin! Compete against each other for several weeks, adding additional reps to your pushups and squats, and lengthen the time you hold your plank.



Advanced

Ready for more? Pick up the pace with this high-intensity workout.

When you're strapped for time, try this high-intensity, 20-minute workout. Before you start, make sure to warm up your muscles with a quick 5-minute walk or march in place.

20-minute circuit training

Full-body: 15 minutes

Do 10 reps of each exercise, jog in place for 30 seconds and repeat.

Mountain climbers

Get into push-up position, keeping your body in a straight line from head to ankles. Raise your right knee to your chest and back down. Repeat with your left leg. Do 10 reps each leg (20 total).

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Push-ups

Get into push-up position with your hands slightly wider than your shoulders. Balance on your knees, if you need to modify. Bend your arms and lower your body until your chest reaches the floor. Pause, then push up.



Squats

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend your knees as deeply as you can, dropping your hips and backside toward the floor. Make sure to keep your back flat and your spine neutral. Your knees should not extend past your toes.



Lunges

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your hands on your hips. Step forward with your right foot and lower your body until your right knee is bent 90 degrees. Squeeze your gluteus muscle (glute) on the leg extended behind you as you lunge. Pause, then stand up and repeat with left leg.

Let the music move you

A recent study showed that people who exercised to personalized, up-tempo music playlists did up to 70% more weekly exercise.* This means music could be the key to a longer workout! So turn on your favorite playlist or check out our [Pandora station](#) and rock on.



Core: 5 minutes

Do each exercise for 30 seconds, rest for 15 seconds and repeat.

Crunches

Lie on your back with your feet on the floor and your hands touching each side of your head. Be careful to not pull on your neck. Tighten your core muscles and lift your upper body off the floor about four inches. Pause, lie back and repeat.

Plank

Get into push-up position with your body in a straight line from head to ankles. Bend your elbows and lower yourself onto your forearms. Tighten your core muscles and hold.

* The UNC website: *New music strategy shows 70 percent increase in exercise adherence* (accessed July 2015): uhn.ca.

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Build your strength*

Strength training is important. It can make it easier to lift and carry things in your daily life and help manage your weight, and also can improve bone density, lean muscle mass and connective tissue strength.

Don't worry - women won't get bulky, just strong! Women don't produce enough testosterone, the hormone needed to make muscles big.

Tips for doing it right.

Do small bursts of strength training every day, whether it's pushups, pull-ups, lunges, squats or planks. Try to fit in **2 total body workouts each week, with about 8 to 12 reps for 2 to 3 sets of each exercise.** Do an Internet search on "compound exercises" or "multi-joint exercises" — these are resistance exercises to work several muscle groups at once.

Control the weight.

It is important to perform each weight-training exercise in a controlled manner. Lower the weight slowly to keep working the same muscles as when you are lifting. To control your speed of movement, try using a 1-2-3 count. The up phase (concentric or lifting) is finished slowly as you count to 1, and the down phase (eccentric or lowering) is finished to a slow count to 2 and 3.

Breathe.

Ideally, you should exhale when the weight is being raised and inhale when the weight is being lowered. Don't hold your breath.

Go to failure.

Muscle changes occur when you perform an exercise to your body's maximum strength, called "muscle failure." When a muscle is overloaded, its fibers are broken down then rebuilt stronger - meaning you gain muscle strength!

Push yourself. Going to failure is challenging, but you'll get stronger faster. Select a weight that allows you to make between 8 and 12 repetitions before you fail, but make sure you can still complete the last rep with good form.

Don't sacrifice form or proper movement patterns to lift a heavier weight. As you get stronger, you can increase the weight or reps.



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Progress slowly.

Don't expect miracles immediately. It takes time for your body and brain to work together, and for muscles to change their shape. After you do an exercise several times, your brain and body start to create movement patterns that make it easier to do each exercise.

Vary your workouts.

Workouts can get stale and your fitness gains may level off. These plateaus are normal. Don't be discouraged — try different exercises and vary the number of repetitions, the weight or resistance, and the amount of rest between sets. Get outside if you're used to going to the gym. Take a class if you work out on your own. Even a small change of scenery can be motivating.



Add on.

Creating your own home gym doesn't have to cost a lot or take a lot of space. You can add equipment to your collection and continue to build your home training center. For example, get a medicine ball, a Bosu® ball or free weights. Research workouts you can do at home with very little equipment. Greatist.com has many easy workouts you can do anywhere.

Do something.

When it comes to strength training — and exercise in general — doing anything is better than being sedentary. You don't have to join a gym to enjoy the benefits. You can do it pretty much anywhere.

Rest.

Remember that strength training is changing your body. These exercises are causing tiny tears in your muscles, which will heal and become stronger. You should take 24-48 hours to rest and heal between workouts. Don't overdo it. Listen to your body: Sore muscles are OK but pain isn't.

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Keep up your momentum

Staying with a fitness program can be hard, but making permanent changes can improve your overall quality of life for the long term. Here are a few tips for staying with it:

Pair up

Working out with a friend can make it easier. You'll have time to catch up, someone to keep you accountable and help you share costs — many personal trainers offer discounts for group sessions.

Start small

Set realistic goals that work with your schedule and include activities you enjoy. You can lengthen and intensify your workouts 1 week at a time.



Have a plan

Structure your fitness plan so you can see what it takes to reach your goal. Make a workout schedule and put it in your calendar.

Track your progress

Keeping track of how many pounds you've lost or steps you've taken can help you stay motivated and accountable. Use a fitness app to help you track calories, workouts and more. Check out apps from Nike, Map My Run, My Fitness Pal and Strava (if you are a bicyclist), and fitness trackers from companies like Fitbit or Garmin. If you prefer to print one out, use this [printable workout log](#). There are plenty of options to help you track your movements and progress!

See the change

Take before, during and after pictures to watch how your body changes. You may be very motivated to see how your hard work pays off! Remember, for muscles to be visible, you need to tone while also reducing body fat. You can achieve this with a combination of weight training, regular cardio exercise and sticking with a healthy eating plan so you're refueling your muscles!

Give it at least a month

According to personal trainer Maisha Hudson, a lot of people give up after only 2 or 3 weeks because they don't see results. Her advice is to stick with it for at least 1 to 2 months — this will give your body time to adjust and you'll start to see positive changes.

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Change it up

Mixing up your workout will keep it fresh

- If you're tired of cardio machines, try a spinning or Zumba® class.
- Work up a sweat with a group instead of working out on your own.
- If you're tired of running, try swimming.
- Go easy on your joints while getting your heart pumping.
- If you're tired of weight-training machines, try body-weight exercises.
- Get stronger using your own body weight to push and pull your muscles.



Take your training on the road

Riding your bicycle is a terrific way to work your muscles and improve your overall health. Visit the [Pedal to Health website](#) for great information and resources to get you started. You'll find maps, general biking info, tips for buying a bike and special offers on bicycle gear.



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Yoga: a workout for your mind, body and spirit

Yoga is great for everyone. This form of exercise can improve your flexibility, muscle tone, endurance and posture. It also can help you calm your mind and focus through deep breathing. Yoga has been proven to work on lowering blood pressure and improving overall well-being.*
Namaste!

Buying your own yoga mat can be a great investment. Many cost as little as \$15 and will help you keep from slipping on the floor. Plus, you'll be able to keep it cleaner than a shared mat.



Basic poses for any level

Warrior pose

Step 1 foot forward and bend your front knee. Turn your back foot to a 90-degree angle. Stretch your arms in front and behind you, palms down, and face forward.



Triangle

Straighten your front leg and bend at the hip, resting your hand on your shin. Reach your other arm high to the sky and gently turn your head to gaze at it. You'll feel a stretch in your legs and hips. Repeat triangle pose on the other side to stretch your other leg.



Tree pose

Start with your feet together, rooted to the ground, and slowly raise 1 foot. Rest it on your calf or thigh. Your hands go from prayer position, straight up, above your shoulders. Repeat on the other leg.



Downward dog

Start on your hands and knees (like a table). Move your hands slightly forward with your fingers spread apart. Curl your toes and lift your knees off the floor to create an upside-down "V." Your feet should be hip-distance apart, knees slightly bent.

