



Healthy Lifestyle

Fitness

Fitness is for life. Motivate yourself with these practical tips.

By Mayo Clinic Staff

Have you ever started a fitness program and then quit? If you answered yes, you're not alone. Many people start fitness programs, but they may stop when they get bored, they don't enjoy it or results come too slowly. Here are seven tips to help you stay motivated.

Start with simple goals and then progress to longer range goals. Remember to make your goals realistic and achievable. It's easy to get frustrated and give up if your goals are too ambitious.

For example, if you haven't exercised in a while, a short-term goal might be to walk 10 minutes a day five days a week. An intermediate goal might be to walk 30 minutes five days a week. A long-term goal might be to complete a 5K walk.

For most healthy adults, the Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity a week, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity. Aim to incorporate strength training exercises of all the major muscle groups into your fitness routine at least twice a week.

Find sports or activities that you enjoy, then vary the routine to keep you on your toes. If you're not enjoying your workouts, try something different. Join a volleyball or softball league. Take a ballroom dancing class. Check out a health club or martial arts center. Discover your hidden athletic talent.

Remember, exercise doesn't have to be boring, and you're more likely to stick with a fitness program if you're having fun.

If it's hard to find time for exercise, don't fall back on excuses. Schedule workouts as you would any other important activity.

You can also slip in physical activity throughout the day. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk up and down sidelines while watching the kids play sports. Take a walk during a break at work. Pedal a stationary bike or do strength training exercises while you watch TV at night.

Research has found that sitting for long periods of time may negatively affect your health, even if you otherwise get the recommended amount of weekly activity. If you sit for several hours a day at work, aim to take regular breaks during the day to move, such as walking to the water fountain to get a drink of water or standing during phone conversations.

Are you hoping to lose weight? Boost your energy? Sleep better? Manage a chronic condition? Write down your goals. Seeing the benefits of regular exercise and writing your goals down on paper may help you stay motivated.

You may also find it helps to keep an exercise diary. Record what you did during each exercise session, how long you exercised and how you felt afterward. Recording your efforts and tracking your progress can help you work toward your goals, and remind you that you're making progress.

You're not in this alone. Invite friends or co-workers to join you when you exercise. Work out with your partner or other loved ones. Play soccer with your kids. Organize a group of neighbors to take fitness classes at a local health club.

After each exercise session, take a few minutes to savor the good feelings that exercise gives you. This type of internal reward can help you make a long-term commitment to regular exercise.

External rewards can help, too. When you reach a longer range goal, treat yourself to a new pair of walking shoes or new tunes to enjoy while you exercise.

If you're too busy to work out or simply don't feel up to it, take a day or two off. Be gentle with yourself if you need a break. The important thing is to get back on track as soon as you can.

Now that you've regained your enthusiasm, get moving! Set your goals, make it fun and pat yourself on the back from time to time. Remember, physical activity is for life. Review these tips whenever you feel your motivation slipping.

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Nov. 27, 2015

Original article: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/fitness/art-20047624>

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