

For Your Benefit

provides a variety of timely information related to your health care benefits and needs



Mini changes can result in many healthy years

You hear it constantly: exercise, exercise, exercise. And you know you should, but you think it takes too much time. You don't feel like it. Your knees hurt from just walking up the stairs. Excuses won't help you feel better; moving will. Getting started with an exercise plan may be easier if you're focused. Here are ways to get motivated. **Before you make any changes in your physical activity, check with your doctor to make sure you're making the proper changes. This is especially important if you have a chronic health condition such as arthritis, diabetes or heart disease. Work with your doctor to come up with an activity plan that matches your abilities.**

Set mini goals

Set realistic goals. Start small. Walk down the street, then around the block. In a few weeks, add another block. Keep going, but listen to your body. When you feel tired, rest. Don't force yourself to do too much too soon. You may injure yourself or become frustrated and stop.

Make a plan

Decide what you need to do and how you plan to do it. Write it down and include the reasons why you're making this change — to lose weight, to feel better, to help with a current condition, or to prevent disease. For example: "I'm going to start walking to lose weight. Losing weight will help reduce my high blood pressure. My doctor told me that losing weight can also help prevent certain cancers that run in my family."

Keep tabs

Keeping track of your progress can be a great motivator. Use a journal to record your successes and note when you've made progress. Did you increase your walking distance or pace? Are you losing weight? *Do you feel better?*

Enjoy the small steps

Make your journey to a healthier lifestyle fun. Celebrate each step. Did you walk a mile instead of a half mile? Did you drop a pound? Can you climb the stairs without breathing heavily? These small accomplishments can eventually lead to big ones. Celebrate each little victory. Get a pedicure. Take a bubble bath. Buy a new CD. Get a new pair of jogging shoes. Go dancing with your loved one. Your victories are unique and so, too, are your rewards. Remember, don't celebrate with a chunk of cake or a cigarette. Your celebrations should reinforce your new habits.

Make it your strategy to get healthier and improve your life.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Keep moving to get fit

Physical activity and exercise are good for you at any age. In fact, staying active can help you:

- Keep and improve your strength so you can stay independent
- Have more energy to do the things you want to do
- Improve your balance
- Prevent or delay some diseases like heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis
- Perk up your mood

Different types of exercise improve your lifestyle

You can build physical activity into your daily routine by exercising. There are four types of exercise. Try each type to get the full benefit of your physical activity.

1. Endurance

Endurance, or aerobic, activities improve the health of your heart, lungs and circulatory system. As a result, they delay or prevent many diseases that are common in older adults, such as diabetes and heart disease. Building your endurance makes it easier to carry out many of your everyday activities, like mowing the lawn or climbing flights of stairs. Endurance exercises include:

- Dancing
- Climbing stairs or hills
- Swimming
- Playing tennis
- Biking
- Playing basketball

2. Strength

Strength exercises make your muscles stronger. Even small increases in strength can make a big difference in your ability to stay independent and carry out everyday activities, such as get up from a chair, climb stairs, carry groceries, open jars, and even play with your grandchildren. Examples of these exercises, which are also called “strength training” or “resistance training,” include:

- Lifting weights
- Using a resistance band

Don't have weights? Visit BCBSM's [healthybluextrasSM](#) for discounts. You can also use common household items, such as bottled water or soup cans.

Correction: The article “Healthy changes can stop diabetes before it starts” in the Spring edition of For Your Benefit contained an error regarding cholesterol levels and diabetes risk.

The corrected information is below: Cholesterol levels that are not within the ideal range increase the risk for diabetes. If your HDL (“good”) cholesterol is less than 35 or your triglyceride level is higher than 250, you have a greater risk of developing diabetes.



3. Balance

Balance exercises, such as standing on one leg or doing tai chi, can make it easier to walk on uneven surfaces and help prevent falls. Lower-body strength exercises also will improve your balance.

4. Flexibility

Stretching exercises can help your body stay flexible. They stretch your muscles and can help your body stay limber. Try doing calf stretches or yoga. Stretching gives you more freedom of movement for daily activities, such as bending to tie your shoes or looking over your shoulder as you back out of the driveway.

The easiest way to keep moving is to find something you like to do and think of the end goal. Ride your bike so you'll have the endurance to dance at that wedding this summer. Practice your balancing exercises so you can walk those cobble-stone streets on your next vacation. Enjoy moving and you'll get the most out of life.



What's the difference between physical activity and exercise?

Both terms refer to the voluntary movements you do that burn calories. Physical activities are actions that get your body moving and are part of your everyday life. Think of the things you like to do. Like being outdoors? Try gardening or going for brisk walks. Like music? Dance around the house or take a ballroom dancing class. Exercise is a form of physical activity that's specifically planned, structured and repetitive, such as weight training, tai chi or an aerobics class.

Physical activity and exercise are both important and can help improve your ability to do the everyday activities you enjoy. The bottom line? There are many ways to be active every day. Find something you enjoy doing, include it in your regular routine, and try to increase your level of activity over time.

Source: National Institute on Aging

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