

12 Week Do-it-Yourself Fitness Program



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Do you have a goal to begin an exercise routine, but not sure how to get started? Health *Plus* can help! You can use this suggested program as a blueprint for your routine. This routine will be based on the recommended fitness guidelines supported by the American Heart Association (AHA) and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). Good luck!

Why participate in a fitness program?

Being active makes you feel better, gives you more energy, improves your mood, and helps you lose weight.

What does a well rounded fitness program include?

1. Cardiovascular activities include walking, swimming, water aerobics, jogging/running, cycling, stair-climbing, using an elliptical trainer, and taking aerobic classes;
2. Strength training exercises consist of using free weights, weight machines, or doing callisthenic exercises such as push-ups or sit-ups. These exercises build strength and endurance in the muscles and joints;
3. Flexibility exercises such as yoga and stretching keep muscles and joints flexible and improve joint range of motion.

What do I need to do before starting in fitness program?

Before starting a physical activity program, check with your health care provider if you:

1. Are inactive and over 40 years old;
2. Have any medical problems;
3. Are over 40 and plan a relatively vigorous exercise program.

Once you have been cleared by your health care provider to start exercising, choose activities that are fun, safe, involve repetitive motion that uses the arms and legs, and build endurance.

Getting Started:

Cardiovascular

Start out with moderate-intensity exercise (comparable to brisk walking).

- Participate in cardio exercise a minimum of 150 minutes each week.
- Noticeably accelerate the heart rate. Use the "The Talk Test" to gauge your intensity level. You should be able to carry on a conversation while exercising at a moderate intensity level.
- Can be accumulated in 10 minute bouts to equal 30 minute minimum.
- Begin slowly and gradually increase frequency, duration, and intensity level.

Want something more vigorous?

- Do cardio exercise with intensity level comparable to jogging.
- Do a minimum of 75 minutes each week.
- Experience rapid breathing and a substantial increase in heart rate.

Combinations of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity can be performed to meet this recommendation. For example, a person can meet the recommendation by walking briskly for 30 minutes twice during the week and then jogging for 20 minutes on two other days.

Strength Training

- Perform a minimum of 6 to 10 separate exercises that train the major muscle groups (chest, shoulders, back, arms, abdomen, hips, and legs).
- Do 2 sets of each exercise – A set is a group of repetitions without stopping.
- Do 10-12 repetitions – Repetitions are the number of times you perform a specific exercise without stopping.
- Work out 2 days per week.
- Perform exercises through a full range of motion.

Flexibility Training

- Perform flexibility exercises that stretch the major muscle groups (chest, shoulders, back, arms, abdomen, hips, and legs).
- Do these a minimum of 2-3 days per week.
- Perform stretches to a position of mild discomfort.
- Hold each stretch 10-30 seconds. DO NOT bounce while in a stretch position.
- Do 3-4 repetitions for each stretch.

Suggested Exercise Plan

Start slowly and gradually increase how long, how often, and how hard you exercise.

Types of cardio exercise include walking, hiking, running, machine-based stair climbing, swimming, cycling, rowing, using an elliptical trainer, cross-country skiing, aerobic dance, dancing, and endurance sports.

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Walk/Cardio for 20-30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 20-30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 20-30 min Stretch	Rest	Rest
2	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Rest
3	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-40 min Stretch	Rest
4	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-40 min Stretch	Rest
5	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-35 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Rest
6	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-35 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Rest
7	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-40 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Rest
8	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-40 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-60 min Stretch	Rest
9	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-60 min Stretch	Rest
10	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-60 min Stretch	Rest
11	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-60 min Stretch	Rest
12	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Strength training Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-60 min Stretch	Rest

Strength Training Exercises

Here are some strength exercises that you can perform to improve your strength and tone your muscles. The strength exercises below use dumbbells as resistance. You can purchase dumbbells at any sporting goods store or at discount department stores such as K-Mart, Target, or Wal-Mart.



Dumbbell Bench Press

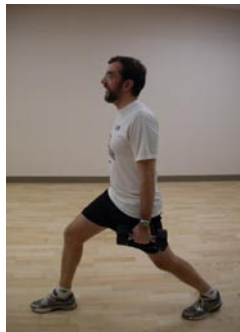
Lying supine on a flat bench, grasp two dumbbells with palms facing forward and thumbs wrapped around the handle. Press the dumbbells to a position level with your elbows fully extended. Slowly lower the dumbbells in a controlled movement to your chest. Without bouncing, gently press back up to starting position and repeat.

Perform 2 sets of 10-12 repetitions, with 30-60 seconds rest in between sets.

Dumbbell Lunge

Start by standing with feet together. Raise one leg while keeping body stable. The raised leg should initiate contact with the ground first with the heel. As you lunge forward, focus on dropping your hips towards the floor rather than driving them forward, making sure to keep your knee in line with your heel. Lower your body till your front thigh becomes parallel to the floor and your front shinbone is in a slight forward lean. Push back to starting position and repeat.

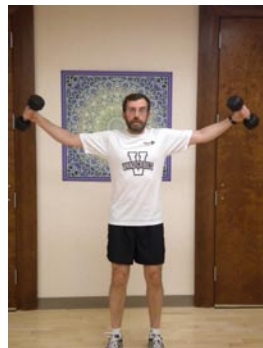
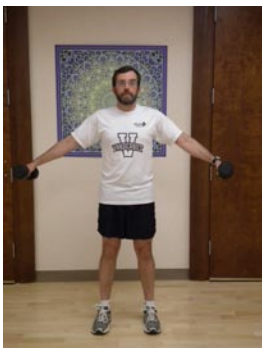
Perform 2 sets of 10-12 repetitions on each leg, with 30-60 seconds rest in between sets.



Dumbbell Lateral Raise

Start by holding dumbbells with a closed, neutral grip and elbows extended by your side. Legs should be slightly wider than hip width apart. Exhale slowly and raise the dumbbells up and out. Your elbows and upper arms should be slightly ahead of your dumbbells. At about 60 degrees, slightly rotate your dumbbells so that the front edge points upward. Continue raising dumbbells until arms are parallel with the floor. Return to starting position and repeat.

Perform 2 sets of 10-12 repetitions, with 30-60 seconds rest in between sets.



Dumbbell Front Squat



Start with feet shoulder width apart and a dumbbell in each hand. Curl the dumbbells to a starting position where they are resting on the front edge of your shoulders. Slowly lower yourself by dropping your hips backward and downward. Careful not to let your hips shift forward. Continue to lower your hips until your thighs are parallel with the ground. Knees should be aligned with 2nd toe, shinbones should be parallel, and back should be flat. Extend the hips back to starting position and repeat.

Perform 2 sets of 10-12 repetitions, with 30-60 seconds rest in between sets.

Dumbbell Bicep Curl

Stand with feet shoulder distance apart. Grasp dumbbell handles with palms facing forward. Keep elbows close to the body and lift dumbbells toward the shoulders. Lower slowly and repeat.

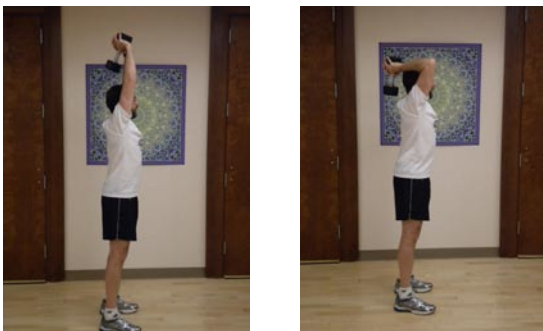
Perform 2 sets of 10-12 repetitions, with 30-60 seconds rest in between sets.



Standing Dumbbell Overhead Triceps Extension

Stand in a split stance position and holding the dumbbell with both hands wrapped around the handle. Extend dumbbell directly overhead with elbows facing forward and slightly bent. Lower the dumbbell in a controlled manner behind your head without moving forearms until reaching 90 degrees or upper arms begin to move backward. Extend elbows to starting position and repeat.

Perform 2 sets of 10-12 repetitions, with 30-60 seconds rest in between sets.



Push-Up

Place palms flat on the mat with fingers facing forward and hands shoulder width apart. Slowly lower your body while keeping your torso tight and head aligned with body. Don't allow your low back to sag or your hips to bend upwards. Continue lowering till your chest or chin hits the floor. Press back up and repeat.

For a modified version, place knees on the ground and have toes resting on the ground as well.

Perform 2 sets of 10-12 repetitions, with 30-60 seconds rest in between sets.



Seated Trunk Rotations

Sit on a mat with your knees bent, feet together, and heels on the floor. Sit upright with chest raised toward the ceiling so that your torso is perpendicular to the floor. Exhale and slowly rotate to one side. Repeat movement back and forth. As your conditioning improves, you can modify this exercise by slightly leaning back and/or holding a weighted medicine ball or dumbbell.

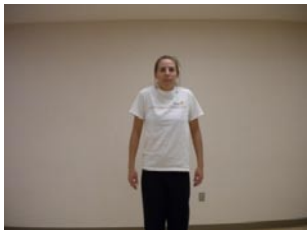
Perform 2 sets of 10-12 repetitions, with 30-60 seconds rest in between sets.

Flexibility Exercises

Below are flexibility exercises that will help you keep muscles and joints flexible and improve joint range of motion.



To stretch the shoulders, arms and chest, start with your hands behind your back and fingers interlocked. Slowly turn your elbows inward while straightening your arms



To stretch your shoulders, start in a neutral position with arms by your side. Raise the top of your shoulders towards your ears till you feel a slight tension in your neck. Hold for 3-5 seconds then release. Repeat twice.



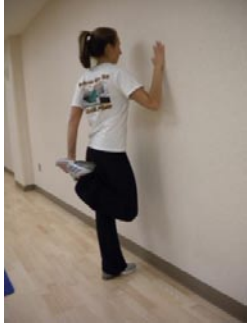
To stretch the upper body, stand with feet shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent. With arms extended over head, bend right arm and grab right elbow with left hand. Bend slowly to the left using your left arm to pull the right arm overhead. Hold for 8-10 seconds then switch sides.



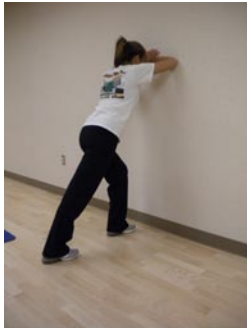
To stretch the groin area, have the soles of your feet touching and be able to grab something on the floor to help pull you forward to increase the stretch. Hold this for 5-6 seconds then release and perform the stretch again.



To stretch your lower back, hips, and legs, lie on your back, bend one knee and gently pull it towards your chest till you feel a slight stretch. Hold each leg for 15-20 seconds then switch.



To stretch the quadriceps, stand facing a wall, bend your right knee and grab your right foot with your left hand. Gently pull the right heel towards your body until you feel a stretch. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds then switch to the opposite leg.



To stretch the calves, face the wall with a little room between the wall and you. Place your forearms on the wall with your head resting on your hands. Bend your left leg and stretch your right leg out behind you. Move your hips forward while keeping your right heel on the ground to feel a stretch in the right calf. Hold the position for 15-30 seconds then switch.



Having your legs bent under you, reach forward with one arm and slowly pull back to feel the stretch. Hold for 15 seconds then switch.

References:

American Heart Association. Physical Activity and Public Health: Updated Recommendations for Adults From the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2007;116;1081-1093.

Anderson, B. *Stretching*. Bolinas, CA: Shelter Publications, Inc; 2000.