



# How to stay active – and why it matters for your health

It's hard to stay active when Netflix releases yet another binge-worthy series, when the weather's gross or when the latest news takes over your social feed. But with all the indoor time we're clocking these days, it's more important than ever to set aside time for physical activity.

Maintaining an active lifestyle can help you stay healthy in the long run. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), daily physical activity is key to preventing chronic or life-threatening illness like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, back pain, osteoporosis and depression. Try using a [physical activity diary](#) like this one from the CDC.

Physical activity can take many different forms. Here are some small adjustments you can make to stay active and cultivate a healthier lifestyle.

## 1. Bike or walk to work.

When a car is your main source of transportation, the hours of inactivity can add up. If you live close to your job, then try biking or walking to work instead of driving.

## 2. Set some fitness goals.

Want to take the prize at the company bowling outing? Or set a PR at this year's Turkey Trot? Fitness goals are a great way to stay active, get in shape and bask in the glory of victory. Start by setting goals that are **SMART** – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound – so you can benchmark your progress against

them. Making progress requires some planning, a training routine – and yes, hard work and dedication. Yet that feeling when you crush your goals will make it all worth it.

## 3. Build a weekly workout routine.

Planning your workouts ahead of time will help you stay on track and meet your fitness goals. It's challenging to settle into a new routine, but as you're getting in shape, you'll start feeling good. You may even want to amp up your fitness!

The [CDC recommends](#) at least 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate-intensity or 1 hour and 15

minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity for adults. Children and adolescents should do 1 hour or more of physical activity daily. If you're new to fitness, start slow, but stick to a routine.

#### **4. Hit the gym.**

It's sometimes tough to stay motivated, especially when your schedule is full and you're feeling run down. Truth be told, a bonus benefit of getting a gym membership is the gymspiration. At the gym, you'll be surrounded by like-minded people who make physical fitness a priority which can help you stay motivated to achieve your fitness goals. Many gyms also offer fun fitness classes. Classes are a great way to add some variety to your routine.

#### **5. Stay inspired.**

Keeping that spark of inspiration can be a real challenge, especially if you're working out and don't notice immediate results. One way you can stay inspired to be physically active is to make an inspiration board (or Pinterest board) of people who motivate you. You can also follow inspiring blogs or Instagram accounts. From pro-athletes to motivators, there are people out there whose physical fitness routines and results can motivate you to stay in the game.

#### **6. Plan group fitness activities with friends.**

Peer pressure can sometimes be a good thing, especially when it comes to fitness. The next time you've got plans with friends, suggest a group activity like dancing, bowling or hiking. Maintaining relationships that revolve solely around food and drink can build some hard-to-break habits. Motivate yourself (and your friends) to get moving with some healthy new activities to try the next time you meet up.

#### **7. Take a stand.**

Too much sitting at work can decrease blood flow to your brain and body, causing mental and physical fatigue. Try using a standing desk at work to keep your body and mind active while you beat that terrible case of the Mondays. Remember to alternate between sitting and standing throughout the day to keep your feet, legs and back happy.

#### **8. Climb your way to better health.**

The next time you have a choice between escalators, elevators and stairs, choose to climb your way to the top. Stairs increase your heart rate and build muscle tone. They're a great way to implement physical activity in your day-to-day without planning ahead of time.

#### **9. Do those chores.**

Cooking, house cleaning and yard work are great ways to increase your physical activity and cross items off your to-do list at the same time. If you're feeling lethargic, it's always the perfect time to do some "spring" cleaning!

#### **10. Get a pet.**

Playing with a furry friend can help add you rack up activity points. Routine walking, grooming and playing fetch or catch-the-red-dot will get your heart pumping. Plus, the [CDC](#) and [National Institutes of Health](#) both state that pets can decrease anxiety, stress and depression, as well as lowering your blood pressure and even reducing your risk of heart attack or stroke.

#### **11. Change the scenery.**

It's easy to become inactive, especially if you never leave the house. Plan a weekend getaway or trip somewhere you've always wanted to travel. Experiencing the unknown will make you more inclined to get moving, check out some sights and try new things. You can use your workout to chase waterfalls, wander through ancient ruins or swim with the dolphins.

#### **12. Try a new hobby.**

Get out of your comfort zone with a new hobby like yoga or salsa lessons. Following a new passion can connect you with a community of people who will inspire and challenge you in new ways. Plus, you might discover some muscles you never knew existed!