

# EXERCISE HANDOUTS

---

Tips for Beginning an Exercise Routine

Motivating Yourself to Exercise

Tai Chi

Tips for a Successful Walking Routine

Water Exercise

Weight-Bearing Exercise

Yoga Tips

# TIPS FOR BEGINNING AN EXERCISE ROUTINE

---

If you are just beginning to exercise, here are some guidelines recommended by fitness experts. It is advisable to get your physician's approval before you begin, especially if you have a heart condition or if you are recovering from a serious illness or injury.

1. Build your exercise program slowly. This will decrease the chances of injury and discouragement. Begin walking at a moderate pace for 5-10 minutes or so. Work your way up to 20 minutes gradually. It's creating the habit that's most important. As exercise becomes a regular part of life, it becomes a reward in itself.
2. When beginning something new, whether it's yoga or tennis, get some instruction. Qualified instructors can help you use your body correctly, progress quickly and avoid injuries.
3. Consider water exercise. It can be effective for both improving fitness and losing weight, no matter what your age or physical condition.
4. Yoga, tai chi and martial arts can be very helpful for back pain and fibromyalgia. They are also reported to improve flexibility, coordination, posture, and stress management.
5. Try different approaches. If you find it hard to walk consistently, sign up for a weight-training or water aerobics class. Different activities appeal to each of us. If you are an outdoor person, you may prefer the trail to the swimming pool, but if you've always liked to dance, you may want to sign up for African dance or even yoga, because you will probably enjoy moving through the postures. Ask about classes and instructors in the community.
6. If you are sore after exercising, take a hot bath or shower, include a few stretches after your workout, and try a massage in the hours after you exercise. Massage can help tight muscles let go and recuperate faster.

# MOTIVATING YOURSELF TO EXERCISE

---

Here are some tips to encourage your desire to exercise. Whatever else you do, remember to be kind to yourself. Changing habits takes time.

1. Exercise with someone you like, whether it's a mate, friend or family member. Make a firm date, for example, going for a walk on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, or meeting for an aerobics class at on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.
2. Pick something you enjoy. If you are an outdoor person try walking, running or biking. If you are challenged and invigorated by competition, try racket sports, volleyball or basketball.
3. Set goals related to participation instead of outcomes like weight loss. Here's an example: I will work out three times a week at a convenient time (even if it's 10 minutes of stair-climbing during your lunch break).
4. Notice how you feel after working out. Did you feel challenged, satisfied, relaxed, or tired in a "good" way? These are the kind of results that will help you want to continue. If you are uncomfortable or in pain, whether it's immediately after or the day after, ease off. Reduce the amount of time and the intensity of your workout. Remember, you want to *enjoy* exercising.
5. On the other hand, you may want to be a bit challenged by your workout. Of course, if you have only 20 minutes when you want to walk for 30, it's better to get out and do it, rather than to skip it. But, when you can, go just a little longer or faster, or use more weight every so often so you don't get bored. You may even want to try a new class at the recreation center or get out the bike instead of your walking shoes.
6. It is advisable to get your physician's approval before you begin an exercise program, especially if you have a heart condition or if you are recovering from a serious illness or injury.

## RESOURCE

For more great ideas, read *Too Busy to Exercise* by Porter Shimer, Storey Communications, 1996.

# TAI CHI

---

Tai chi or tai chi chuan is a Chinese form of health-promoting exercise. “Chi” refers to the flow of energy through the body. The exercises are based on the ancient idea that health begins with the free flow of chi.

Tai chi has been shown to improve balance, reduce high blood pressure, and ease the discomforts of back pain, arthritis, and excess stress. During the series of tai chi movements you are constantly shifting your body weight, allowing each movement to flow smoothly into the next. The goal is to focus all your awareness on the movements, which, in turn, lets your breath and mind become calm and clear.

Learning the sequence of tai chi movements and achieving the coordination of them in your body is a gradual process. With 20 minutes of daily practice, however, you are very likely to notice improvement in your posture, endurance, ease of movement, and ability to cope with stress.

Chi kung is another Chinese form of movement that balances the flow of chi. It focuses on the use of the breath, slow movements, and meditation.

If you want more information about tai chi or chi kung, ask for referrals to qualified teachers.

# TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL WALKING ROUTINE

---

Walking in supportive shoes with flexible soles can be one of the best forms of aerobic exercise. According to Mark Bricklin, editor of *Prevention* magazine, “No other activity bestows the blessings of exercise as easily, enjoyably, or safely as the simple act of going for a walk.”

If you can only manage a short five or ten-minute walk in the beginning, remember that any fitness program begins with one small step. The goal is to do some exercise while minimizing the chances of injury or discouragement. If you feel successful, you can increase your walk, one to three minutes at a time. Work your way up to 20 or 30 minutes gradually. Take at least a month to do that if you like. It’s creating the habit that’s most important.

Here are some tips for a successful walking routine.

Plan motivation strategies.

- Find a walking partner you like to make it more fun.
- Set frequency goals. Two to three times a week is good for starters. If you find you enjoy it, gradually increase to 4 or 5 times weekly.

Pay attention to the age of your shoes, and replace them when necessary. If the heels or soles are unevenly worn, they can accentuate any imbalances in your gait. You may need to replace them as often as every 6 months.

Warm up. For the first few minutes, go at about half your normal walking speed.

## RESOURCE

*Too Busy to Exercise* by Porter Shimer, Storey Communications, Inc. 1996.

# WATER EXERCISE

---

Exercising in water can improve your cardiovascular fitness and overall strength, and greatly reduce your likelihood of injury from exercise.

People of all ages and conditions can participate in water exercise. Much less stress is placed on the body's joints in the water, making it safer and easier for people with arthritis, back and neck conditions, and excess weight than exercising on land. You are also less likely to experience soreness after exercising in water.

Swimming is an excellent form of exercise, but water aerobics has the advantage of putting you through a group of exercises which move all your joints and muscles.

Your massage therapist may be able to refer you to water aerobics and other water exercise classes in the community.

## WATER AEROBICS

- Uses a variety of rhythmic movements in the water, using the whole body and combining arm and leg movements in varying exercises
- Increases in intensity gradually, varying from beginning to advanced
- Can be conducted in both waist-to-chest high and deep water
- Includes toning, strengthening, and aerobic exercises
- Usually includes kicks, leg swings, knee lifts, squats, and marching or jogging
- Begins with learning correct body position and coordination of specific movements
- Is cooler than working out on land
- Often involves working with a supportive group of people who face challenges similar to yours

## FOR ARTHRITIS SUFFERERS

If you suffer from arthritis, you may want to try exercising in warm water. Warm water helps your muscles relax, which can relieve pain. Regular exercise helps to improve the flexibility of your joints and your overall strength and fitness. Combining the two in warm water exercise can be a very effective method of managing the discomforts of arthritis. If your local pool or club only offers cool water pools, warm water pools are often available through physical therapy facilities. Ask your physician for advice.

# WEIGHT-BEARING EXERCISE

---

To maintain bone strength we need to move muscles and bones against gravity. When you do weight-bearing exercise your bone adapts to the impact of the weight by building more cells and becoming stronger. Osteoporosis is a bone-thinning disease that is largely preventable with weight-bearing exercise and a good health habits, such as a nourishing diet including fresh vegetables and adequate protein. Preventing osteoporosis is important because the disease is a main cause of fractures in older age for women and some men. Bone-building exercises include:

- Walking, jogging, and hiking
- Yard work, including pushing a lawn mower and brisk gardening
- Sports such as soccer, baseball and basketball
- Dancing, aerobics, and stair climbing
- Tennis and racquetball
- Skiing, skating and bowling
- Karate and other vigorous martial arts
- Weight training

Exercising 20-30 minutes a day, three to four days a week is recommended. The benefits will last as long as you continue to exercise. Even if you can't find time for 30 minutes at one time, three 10-minute segments give you the same benefits. And you don't have to walk outside if the weather is bad or you feel unsafe. You can walk at a mall or even move around your living room.

To build bone in all parts of the body, you have to work all the parts. For example, if walking is your main exercise, you won't be building bone in your upper body. But if you want to add weight-bearing to your upper body, you don't have to lift huge barbells. Lifting soup cans works just fine. Or carry small weights when you are on your walk.

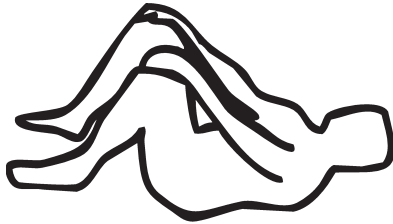
Be sure to check with your physician before beginning a new exercise or weight-lifting program. He or she may want you to begin gradually. You may also wish to have a bone density test to find out if you already have bone loss. If you want to begin lifting weights, an instructor or personal trainer can advise you on lifting in a way that will minimize injury.

Walking, jogging, racket sports, and aerobics all require well-fitting, supportive shoes. Be sure to replace shoes when they wear out.

Yoga has a long history of helping people build strong bodies that can withstand the stress of daily living. Deep breathing is vital to yoga, and the exercises often use the breath to help the body relax. Exhaling completely allows us to inhale fully, expanding our lungs both in front and back. Complete breathing improves oxygen flow to our muscles and our brain, helping us to relax further and become more alert and clear-minded.

The following stretches are modified yoga postures. If you enjoy these stretches and would like to know more, your massage therapist may be able to refer you to a qualified, experienced yoga instructor.

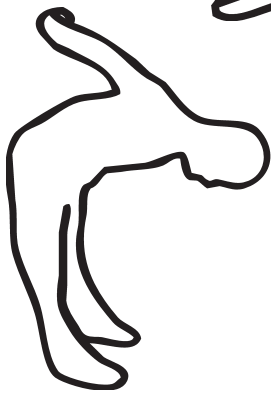
## THE STRETCHES



1. Release the small of your back. Lie on your back with your feet flat on the floor. Place a hand on each knee. Exhale and draw the knees in toward your chest, pressing your low back into the floor. Hold for a moment or two, inhale, and let your knees rise until your arms are straight. Exhale and pull the knees back into your chest. Repeat several times. End with your feet back on the floor.



2. Roll your spine. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, and your arms and shoulders relaxed. Exhale and begin to bend forward, starting by tucking your chin. Think of rolling down your spine, one vertebra at a time. Go slowly, taking 3 to 5 slow breaths to reach the point of a full, comfortable stretch. Touch your toes if you can, or simply stretch as far as you can without straining. Hold the stretch for 2 or 3 relaxed breaths. Inhale and start rolling up, one vertebra at a time, taking 3 to 5 breaths as you return to starting position. If it's more comfortable for you, bend your knees slightly throughout the stretch. Repeat several times.



3. Relieve shoulder tension. Stand up straight, with feet shoulder-width apart and hands clasped behind your back. Bend over from your waist and bring your arms as close as you can toward your head without straining. Keep your arms straight and your hands clasped. Hold for 10 seconds and relax. Repeat several times.