

Getting Started Checklist

Congratulations on taking the first step toward regular exercise and improved health.

Regular physical activity helps reduce your risk of stroke, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. Plus, it improves your mood, your sleep, and your energy levels.

This checklist will help you get ready and get going!

Check with your doctor. Before you begin a fitness program, check with your doctor to make sure you are in good health for exercising. This is especially important if you have a chronic health condition such as arthritis, diabetes, or heart disease.

Find your starting point. Record some basic information to help you measure your progress and stay motivated. Take a moment to determine and record:

- How long it takes to walk a specific distance, such as three laps around a track or one time around your block
- Your pulse rate at the end of that walk. To do this, place your index and third fingers on your neck on the side of your windpipe. When you feel your

pulse, count the number of beats you feel for 15 seconds. Then multiply that number by 4. That number is your beats per minute or your pulse rate. As you become more fit, your pulse rate should go down, as it shows your heart is working more efficiently.

- How many pushups you can do at a time
- How close you can get to reaching your toes while bending over
- Your health levels – See the “Know Your Numbers” fact sheet

Make a plan. A written plan = makes it easier to designate time to exercise and to stay on track. Decide on specific, measurable activities, such as exercise for 20 minutes three times a week.

Record your workouts on your schedule or to-do list so you make them a priority. Also, determine and list your fitness goals, such as reaching a healthier weight, lower resting heart rate, or lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Writing down your goals can increase your commitment to exercise and your success in getting fit.

Have the right gear. There is no need to spend a lot of money to get fit, but you do need to invest in some basics.



The most important item is a pair of quality athletic shoes. Pick shoes that are designed for the activity you want to do, and that have good

cushioning and arch support.

Oftentimes, a trained professional at a sporting goods store can help you pick the shoes that are right for you, your arch, and your stride. Shoes should be replaced every three to six months when they lose their support.

You may also consider investing in equipment or exercise gear. Here, it's important to choose an activity you enjoy and that you realistically can see yourself doing over time. Sometimes it is a good idea to try the equipment for a while at a gym before you buy it on your own.

Now that you're ready to get started, download our fact sheet on Physical Activity for more information.

For more information about ways to reduce your risk of stroke, visit www.stroke.org.

Note: This fact sheet is compiled from general, publicly available information and should not be considered recommended treatment for any particular individual. You should consult your provider about any personal medical concerns.

All publications are reviewed by National Stroke Association's Publications Committee.

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