

# Be more active, lead a better life!

**80%** of people want to be more active, but only half of them actually step up to the plate.

Why do so many of us lead sedentary lifestyles when we want to be more active?

One of the reasons is undoubtedly our modern lifestyle. In the past, it was necessary to be active, but today, being active is a choice. In fact, cars, elevators, computers, televisions, remote controls, and other technologies take away many of our opportunities for being more active. And with our fast-paced lifestyle, we all too often think of physical activity as something to do later, “when there’s more time”!

**The result:** we are not active enough, and it takes a toll on our health.

**Being inactive is as harmful to the heart as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day.**

## What’s the solution?

To be active, you don’t have to be an athlete or go into a training program. Instead, you have to find opportunities to be active in your daily life. It takes imagination, motivation, and finding the time you need. For example, you can choose to walk or bike rather than drive short distances, and get moving on a regular basis, rather than simply sitting in front of the television or computer.

### An important goal

If you make a point of being active for **at least 30 minutes a day**, it could make a noticeable difference to your health.

In addition to preventing and treating a number of illnesses, physical activity improves your well-being and quality of life. It doesn’t just add years to your life, it adds life to those years!

### Why wait?

You don’t have to wait for ideal conditions to get moving. The best way to start is to go at your own pace, taking into account your particular situation and abilities.

**Why not consider physical activity an opportunity to make yourself feel good, rather than seeing it as an obligation?**

So, if you’re ready to start being physically active, this pamphlet is for you. It will give you some ideas to help get into the habit of being active . . . and having fun!



# Get into the habit...

## Why **be active** every day?

When you find reasons to be physically active, it is easier to motivate yourself. **Having more energy** and **feeling better** are often what encourage people to begin and to continue being physically active. Doing physical activity on a regular basis also helps to:

- **Prevent and better control a number of illnesses**, such as heart disease, hypertension, certain types of cancer, diabetes, and osteoporosis
- Improve, maintain, or regain good **physical condition**
- Maintain or lose **weight**
- Relax and better manage **stress**
- Take **time for yourself** or have fun **with others**
- Remain **independent** longer as you grow older

**No medication can provide all of these benefits!**

## Being physically active: what does it mean?

Ideally, it means being active every day . . . or almost. For how long? That depends on the intensity level. If you take a low-intensity approach (soft approach), you have to be active for longer and more often. If you like physical exertion (energetic approach), you can be active for a shorter time and less often.



### Soft approach

- Low-intensity activities (little or no shortness of breath)
- For 45 to 60 minutes\*
- Most days of the week

#### Examples:

- Walking at a normal pace
- Bicycle rides, dancing, muscular toning and stretching
- Household work such as vacuuming, major housecleaning, washing the car, or yard work

### Moderate approach

- Moderate-intensity activities (light to moderate shortness of breath)
- For 30 minutes\*
- Most days of the week

#### Examples:

- Walking briskly
- Sports activities requiring a moderate effort, such as cycling, badminton, and swimming

### Energetic approach

- High-intensity activities (moderate to substantial shortness of breath)
- For 30 minutes\*
- 3 or 4 times a week

#### Examples:

- Jogging
- Sports activities requiring a considerable effort, such as cycling at more than 25 km/h, cross-country skiing, and vigorous hiking

### A little less, that's still good!

When you're not used to being physically active, it is preferable to start gradually. And those first steps toward a more active lifestyle are very rewarding. With time, as you get into better physical shape, you can increase the duration, intensity, and frequency of your activities.

### Should I consult first?

If you are inactive or **have certain health problems**, you should be careful. If you decide to walk a little more, the level of risk is low. But if you want to do more strenuous activities, you should answer the *Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire* (PAR-Q)<sup>†</sup> to see if you need to seek advice from a doctor or health professional before you begin.

\* It is not necessary to do these activities in one session. You can easily spread them out over periods of at least 10 minutes throughout the day.

<sup>†</sup> [www.csep.ca](http://www.csep.ca) (choose "Publications", then "Fitness Publications" and "PAR-Q Forms").

# ...one big step toward health



## A FEW SUGGESTIONS TO GET MOVING

### Walking: easy, **practical**, and effective

Walking is the most popular physical activity. This is not surprising, since walking can be done anytime, anywhere. Plus, people of all ages can do it, there is little risk of injury and it costs nothing.

You can walk in the morning to start off your day, at lunch hour during your workday, while your kids are doing a planned activity, or in the evening after dinner. If you like to have company, invite a family member, neighbour, or colleague to walk with you. On weekends, take advantage of different walking trails in the region, or go on organized nature or city hikes.

Turn a pleasant activity into a practical one by walking to get around. There are many opportunities!

- ▶ Go to the bank, corner store, or video store on foot.
- ▶ Walk your dog, rather than putting it out in the yard.
- ▶ Pick up your kids at school or daycare on foot. It's a great time for a chat!
- ▶ Get off the bus or subway a few stops sooner and do a part of the trip to and from work on foot.
- ▶ Park your car at the far end of the parking lot. There are always lots of parking spaces!
- ▶ Join a walking club in your neighbourhood or start your own group.
- ▶ When you play golf, leave the golf cart behind. Your steps will add up quickly!
- ▶ Boycott elevators and escalators: climb every set of stairs you come across.

### Track your progress, step by step

A pedometer, a little device that you strap to your belt, calculates the number of steps that you take in a day. It can help some people set goals and walk more. Depending on whether you are inactive or already active, aim for between 6,000 and 10,000 steps a day.

### Maximize your walk

To increase the intensity of your walk and its benefits, walk briskly, as if you were in a hurry, and walk up hills or stairs, or alternate between walking and jogging.

## Activities for every season

To take full advantage of physical activity, it is best to be physically active on a regular basis over the weeks, months, and years. Don't get caught unaware: plan for the changes in season. For physical activity ideas:

- ▶ Think about the activities that you liked to do when you were younger.
- ▶ Ask your friends and family if you can accompany them during their activities, or invite them to try a new activity with you.
- ▶ Find out about activities and classes organized by your municipality, local schools, or sports centres in your area.

### Not enough time?

It might be difficult to play badminton or to cross-country ski several times a week. Walking, exercising at home, and doing vigorous housework are easy ways of doing physical activity during your busier days.



## Less time in front of the screen!

**Did you know that we spend an average of 20 to 30 hours a week watching TV? And on top of that, there's the computer! Perhaps you should rethink your leisure-time choices to make room for being more active. As for watching TV, why not ride a stationary bike or do exercises at the same time?**

Source: Statistics Canada. Television viewing, by age and sex, by province, 2004.



# I'm taking control

## SOLUTIONS THAT LAST

### 1. Choose activities that you like

To persevere, the activities that you choose should be enjoyable for you. Take a few minutes to identify activities that fit your tastes and personality. For example, if you like socializing, think about registering for a class rather than doing exercises at home.

### 2. Plan time to be active

Try to find ways to include time for activity in your workday, at home, and during your leisure hours. If your schedule is very busy, think about going for a walk at noon, or getting up a little earlier in the morning to do some exercises at home.

### 3. Vary your activities

Do away with monotony! If you walk, change your route. Plan outdoor activities, or alternate with something else. You can work on other parts of your body, develop new skills ... and have even more fun!

### 4. Be active with your friends, family, and colleagues

It's a fact: people who do physical activity with one or several other persons are less likely to stop. When we set a time with someone, we are more inclined to respect the commitment.

### 5. Monitor your activities

Write down your daily activities in a calendar, notebook, or diary. It's surprising—and highly motivating—to see what you've done week after week and monitor your progress.

## RESOURCES

#### Canadian Health Network:

[www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca)

#### Canada's Physical Activity Guide:

[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide)

#### Canadian Cancer Society:

[www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

#### Heart and Stroke Foundation:

[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)

## How to overcome the challenges?

If you find your enthusiasm flagging, remind yourself of the reasons that you started in the first place, and think about all the benefits you have derived. This is often a powerful motivator. If you have difficulty reaching the goals you set, ask yourself if they are realistic. Try to identify the reasons for your difficulty and look for solutions. When you're very busy, slow down a bit, but avoid stopping altogether.

"I have felt so good since I started swimming again. I'm sleeping better, I'm less stressed, and I have more energy. I could never go back to the way I was."

Simone, 54 years old



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