Exercise & Movement

Mountain Valleys HEALTH CENTERS

What are the benefits of exercise?

Moving your body has many benefits, it can:

- Burn calories, which can help with weight control
- Help control blood sugar levels, if you're diabetic
- Lower blood pressure, especially if you have high blood pressure
- Lower stress, which can help with depression and anxiety
- Keep bones strong, so they don't get thin and break easily
- Lower the chance of dying from heart disease
- Reduces risk of several types of cancer

What are the three main types of exercise?

The three main types of exercise are:

- **Aerobic Exercise** - Raises your heart rate (*i.e. walking, running, dancing, riding bike, swimming)*
- **Muscle Strengthening** - Makes your muscles stronger *(using weights, exercise bands, weight machines, push-ups)*
- **Stretching** - Helps your muscles and joints move more easily

It's important to have all three types of exercise in your exercise program, to keep your body, muscles, and joints as healthy as possible. Also, getting extended exercise *(weekend warriors)* 1 or 2 days a week, has similar health risk reduction and benefits as daily exercise.

Should I talk to my doctor before exercising?

If you have not exercised before or have not exercised in a long time, talk with your doctor before you start a very active exercise program.

If you have heart disease or risk factors for heart disease *(like high blood pressure or diabetes)* your doctor might recommend that you have an exercise test before starting an exercise program.

When you start an exercise program, start slowly. For example, do the exercise at a slow pace or for a few minutes only. Over time, you exercise faster and for longer periods of time.

What should I do when I exercise?

Each time you exercise, you should:

- **Warm up** - Warming up can help keep from hurting your muscles when you exercise. To warm up, do a light aerobic exercise *(walking slowly)* or stretch for 5-10 minutes.
- **Work out** - You should try to get a mix of aerobic exercise, muscle strengthening and stretching. During an aerobic workout, you can walk fast, swim, run, or use an exercise machine. Other activities like dancing or playing tennis, are also forms of aerobic exercise. You should also take time to stretch all of your joints, including your neck, shoulders, back, hips, and knees. At least 2 times a week, you can do muscle strengthening exercises as part of your workout.
- **Cool down** - Cooling down helps keep you from feeling dizzy after you exercise and helps prevent muscle cramps. To cool down, you can do a light stretch or do a light aerobic exercise for 5 minutes.

How often should I exercise?

Doctors recommend that people exercise at least 30 minutes a day, on 5 or more days a week.

If you can't exercise for 30 minutes straight, try to exercise for 10 minutes at a time, 3 or 4 times a day. Even exercising for shorter amounts of time is good for you, especially if it means spending less time sitting.

What if I don't have time to exercise?

Even if it's hard to set aside a lot of time to exercise, you can still improve your health by moving your body more. There are many ways you can be more active, such as:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Park in a parking space that is farther away
- Take a longer route when you walk from one place to another

Spending a lot of time sitting still is bad for your health. Try to get up and move around when you can. Even small amounts of movement, like short walks, doing chores, or gardening can help improve your health.

What else should I do when I exercise?

- Drink fluids during and after exercise
- Avoid exercising outside if it is too hot/cold
- Wear layers of clothing, so you can take them off if you get too hot
- Wear shoes that fit well and support your feet
- Be aware of your surroundings if you exercise outside