The health benefits of regular exercise and physical activity have been well documented and are hard to ignore. The benefits from exercise range from weight management to improving mood, increasing energy and improving sleep. Additionally, exercise can help to combat a number of health conditions or diseases.

Exercise has been shown to help manage glucose levels in people with diabetes, improve blood pressure, lower LDL and raise HDL in people with high cholesterol, and reduce the risk for heart disease.

And while regular exercise can help in preventing or managing these health conditions, a lack of physical activity increases your risk for a number of chronic conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, cancer, and more.

Regardless of your age, physical ability or health condition, the benefits of regular exercise and physical activity are available to you and can have a significant impact on your health.

"National guidelines for adults recommend a total of 150 minutes per week of moderate aerobic activity."
Exercise Principles

**INDIVIDUALITY**
People are different and their exercise needs vary; optimal benefits occur when a program meets the needs and capacities of the individual.

**SPECIFICITY**
Training must be specific to the individual’s goals.

**PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD**
You get improvements by doing a bit more each time.

**VARIETY**
Variety allows recovery and reduces the risk for injury. *(This does not mean simply changing exercises all the time)*

**REST**
Use rest intervals to get the best out of your exercise.

**REVERSIBILITY**
Use it or lose it. It’s easier to keep fitness than to create it.

**FITT (Frequency, Intensity, Time, Type)**
Each exercise or activity plan has an ideal training frequency (how often), intensity (how hard), time (duration, rest intervals) and type of exercise to be used.

Progress in Stages & Goal Setting

Unrealistic expectations can derail efforts to become more physically active. Often times, when a person is fresh off a decision to change their behavior and begin exercising, they set goals that are too aggressive, and may result in either de-motivation or injury. **Goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and on a timeline (SMART).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Physical Activity</th>
<th>Number of Weeks</th>
<th>Frequency of Activity (/week)</th>
<th>Duration of Activity (minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>15-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>5-24</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>25-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>20-60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Points:
- Measurable changes begin: stamina and endurance; individual at risk of slacking off; workload and intensity of activity should increase.

Barriers & Facilitators

We all know that physical activity and exercise is good for you, but common barriers can prevent you from making healthy choices. Fortunately, for every barrier, there are many possible solutions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Out of Shape</th>
<th>Start with activities you can tolerate. Increase your activity slowly over time.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Constraints</td>
<td>Prioritize. Consider what else you can reasonably give up. Get up earlier in the morning, do things with the kids, think of activities you can do while watching TV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Do indoor activities. Get an exercise video/DVD. Walk inside the mall or a large store.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Conscious</td>
<td>Do indoor, solo activities. Wear loose clothes that don’t emphasize your body shape. Find a gym that caters to people you feel comfortable being with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>Choose activities that you enjoy. Do different activities on different days. Get an exercise partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Motivation</td>
<td>Focus on reasons for being healthier (i.e. children, spouse, long-term life goals). Plan a reward when you meet your goal. Get an activity accountability partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic Expectations</td>
<td>Focus on the positives that activity brings (i.e. more energy, taking steps to improve your health). Give it a month or more before you expect to see the scale change since you may be gaining muscle mass.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Common facilitators include:**
- **Social Support:** Exercise partner, family member or co-worker
- **Community Resources:** Fitness center, local pool or community center
- **Reminders and Cues:** Notes, entry on your calendar or reminder alarm
- **Rewards:** Incentives to maintain motivation (preferably non-caloric ones)