What you need to know about:

Starting an Exercise Routine

Regular exercise reduces your risk of high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis. A complete exercise program includes three types of exercise:

- Aerobic activity—increases your heart rate
- Resistance training—increases muscle resistance
- Stretching—improves muscle flexibility and joint mobility

The following is an exercise program outline for beginners. For additional exercise information as well as detailed examples and illustrations, please visit www.acefitness.org.

Aerobic Exercise
Aerobic exercise refers to activities that use oxygen to create the energy needed to complete the exercise. Aerobic exercise maintains and even increases your heart's strength and endurance. When you perform aerobic activity, your heart beats faster to meet the demand for more blood and oxygen by the muscles of the body. Current recommendations state that adults should engage in moderate intensity exercise for at least 30 minutes on five or more days of the week. One way to monitor the intensity of your exercise is by using the "talk-test method":

- Exercise at a **light intensity** level: You should be able to sing while doing the activity.
- Exercise at a **moderate intensity** level: You should be able to carry on a conversation comfortably while engaging in the activity.
- Exercise at a **vigorous intensity** level: You should become winded or too out of breath to carry on a conversation.

Examples of aerobic exercise are jogging, brisk walking, dancing, swimming and biking.

Below is a sample aerobic exercise program for beginners:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Start with</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Reminders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>3 days a week</td>
<td>5 days a week</td>
<td>• Add new activities such as biking or swimming to continue challenging your body, prevent boredom and to avoid overuse injuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>20-30 minutes</td>
<td>30-60 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Brisk walking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resistance Training
Push-ups, pull-ups, lifting weights and using resistance bands are all examples of resistance training. Research continues to demonstrate that resistance training increases both muscle and bone strength. Additional benefits of resistance training include:

- Increased lean body mass
- Increased metabolism
- Decreased body fat
- Decreased body aches and fatigue

It is recommended for increased resistance training and bone density that you perform appropriate exercises three days per week.

**Tips to help you start and stick with an exercise program**

- Choose something you like to do. Read, listen to music or watch TV while exercising.
- Make sure your exercise routine suits you physically. For instance, someone with painful joints should choose a low impact activity such as walking or biking.
- Forget "no pain, no gain." While a little soreness is normal after you first start exercising, pain isn't. Stop if you hurt.
- Don't get discouraged. It can take time before you notice some of the changes from exercise.
Below is a sample resistance training program for beginners:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Start with</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Reminders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Frequency  | 3 days a week | 3 days a week | • Alternate days and muscle groups.  
• Use appropriate weight for your resistance level. You should feel moderate muscular fatigue after 8-12 repetitions.  
• Visit [www.acefitness.org/getfit/freeexercise.aspx](http://www.acefitness.org/getfit/freeexercise.aspx) for exercise illustrations and tips. |
| Time       | • 8-12 repetitions of each exercise (1 set)  
• Complete 1-2 sets per exercise session | • Increase resistance level/weight.  
• Increase repetitions.  
• Increase the number of sets. |
| Activity   | • Abdominal curls  
• Back extension  
• Calf raises  
• Lunges  
• Push-ups  
• Squats  
• Tricep dips | • Vary your exercises after 3 months and experiment with different home or gym equipment such as a stability ball or resistance bands. This will help you to continue challenging your muscles and avoid boredom. |

**Stretching**

A safe and effective stretching program increases physical performance. A flexible muscle has the ability to move through a greater range of motion and requires less energy to do so, while greatly decreasing your risk of injury.

Additional benefits of stretching exercises include:

• Reduced muscle soreness after exercise  
• Improved posture

Below is a sample stretching program for beginners:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Goal</th>
<th>Reminders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Frequency  | Every time you exercise or at least 3 times per week | Your goal is increased flexibility. | • Stretch only after a minimum of 5-10 minutes of brisk activity.  
• Post exercise, complete an extended stretching session. |
| Time       | Hold each stretch for 20-40 seconds. Do not bounce. | | |
| Activity   | • Calf stretch  
• Hamstring stretch  
• Lower back stretch  
• Shoulder stretch  
• Triceps stretch  
• Quadriceps stretch | | |

**Additional Information**

• For information on exercise related discounts for Harvard Pilgrim members, please visit the “Your Member Savings” page at [www.harvardpilgrim.org](http://www.harvardpilgrim.org).

• For exercise illustration and tips visit [www.acefitness.org/getfit/freeexercise.aspx](http://www.acefitness.org/getfit/freeexercise.aspx)

*Remember, before starting any exercise program, talk with your health care provider, particularly if you have high blood pressure, heart disease or joint problems.*