

Your doctor recommends that you get more active. But does the very thought of exercise make you break out in a sweat? Working out doesn't have to be work!

Keep reading to learn some simple, effective, and fun ways to get moving. You can get your body—and blood pressure—into better shape.

1 How Exercise Lowers Blood Pressure

Exercise works your muscles. What's the hardest working muscle in your body? Your heart! It has to pump at least 2,500 gallons of blood throughout your body every day.²

Regular exercise strengthens your heart. A stronger heart can pump harder with less effort. The less effort your heart uses to pump, the less force it puts on your arteries. Your blood pressure can drop as a result.³

Reduce your time sitting or watching TV and start getting active. Exercising can help you lose extra weight. Losing just 10 pounds can be enough to lower your blood pressure.⁵



Other Benefits of Exercise

While it's giving your heart more pumping power, exercise can also:⁴

- Help you burn calories and control your weight
- Help lower your blood pressure
- Help reduce your risk for heart disease and diabetes
- Help keep your bones and muscles strong
- Help you feel less stressed
- Help increase your energy

Get ready...get set...GO!

Taking those first few steps seems so hard. But once you get moving, you'll be amazed at how quickly you get into rhythm and how much better and stronger you'll feel. If you have a few setbacks along the way, don't be too hard on yourself. Get back on track as soon as you can, and help get on your way to your goal!

2 Setting Fitness Goals You Can Achieve

Your goal is to get at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise (such as brisk walking) on most days of the week.⁶ Does 30 minutes sound like a lot to fit into your day? Don't sweat it! Even a little exercise goes a long way.

Break your exercise down into small segments:

- To start, walk or do another exercise for just 5 or 10 minutes twice a week
- Every week, add another 5 minutes to your routine until you can do a full 30 minutes

- Add one more day each week, then another day, until you're exercising at least 5 days a week

What do you want to get out of your exercise program?

- Do you need to lose weight?
- Do you want more energy?
- Are you trying to lower your blood pressure or blood sugar level?

Work with your doctor to design an exercise program that suits your lifestyle and goals.



3 Learn How to Be FITT

Thinking "FITT" will help you remember the basics of a safe exercise plan and can help get you on your way to your blood pressure goal. Talk to your doctor to see if FITT is right for you.

F Frequency

- To lower your blood pressure, exercise on most, or all days of the week.

I Intensity

Moderate or more intense exercise, if appropriate, will help lower your blood pressure.

How do you know if you're exercising hard enough?⁷

- Your breathing will get faster.
- You will break out in a light sweat after a few minutes.
- You should be able to talk, but not sing.
- If you're breathing too hard to talk, slow down the pace.

T Time

- Exercise for 30 minutes on most, or all days of the week.
- If you can't do all 30 minutes at once, exercise for 10 or 15 minutes, three times a day—in the morning, at lunchtime, and in the evening.
- Soon you'll build up to 30 minutes or longer.

T Type

- Combine at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise five days a week with two days of strength training.⁸
- Aerobic exercise makes your heart beat faster and sends more blood to your body. Examples: Walking or jogging, swimming, dancing.
- Strength training works your muscles. Examples: Body weight (crunches, push-ups, squats), free weights, resistance bands.

If you enjoy walking but you aren't able to walk quickly, that's O.K. Walking slowly for a longer period is just as helpful as a shorter, brisk walk.⁹