

# GETTING STARTED WITH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

October 2003

The following material has been adapted from information from the American Diabetes Association ([www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)) and SPARC – Sport and Recreation New Zealand ([www.sparc.org.nz](http://www.sparc.org.nz)).

## 1. GETTING OVER THE FIRST HURDLE

Taking that first step can be hard. We all have plenty of reasons not to start increasing our level of physical activity. But, **it's never too late to start**. With few exceptions, even if you have a disability or are injured, you can still improve your level of fitness. Here are a few tips on how to get started.

### 1.1 YOU THINK YOU'RE TOO OLD?

- Look around for classes or groups with others in your age group. There are walking groups, water exercise classes, stretch programmes, Tai Chi, chair aerobics classes and many more classes for people in your age group.
- Check your local YMCA, YWCA, Information Office or Regional Sports Trust for classes and activities.
- Your GP or practice nurse can write you a prescription for exercise into the Green Prescription scheme. Phone 0800 ACTIVE (0800 228 483) for more information. This scheme can help you to find an activity that you feel comfortable with.

### 1.2 YOU THINK YOU'RE TOO OVERWEIGHT?

- Don't feel awkward or embarrassed to exercise – most people feel slightly embarrassed when they start out. The reality is that people will admire you when they see your commitment to improving your health.
- If you're trying to lose weight, even a small amount of regular physical activity can help.
- Remember that sometimes when you are exercising your weight may not come down. But you have exchanged fat for muscle (changed your body composition and shape). This is a big achievement (both for health and looks) even though your weight may not have changed.

### 1.3 YOU THINK YOU'RE TOO WEAK?

- Regular physical activity will quickly help you develop strength and energy.

### 1.4 YOU THINK YOU'RE TOO SICK?

- Of course, you can't exercise when you're ill. But once you are feeling better, regular physical activity will help you stay well. Start small and stick with it.

### 1.5 YOU THINK YOU'RE TOO BUSY?

- You don't have to spend hours exercising to see the benefits. Some of the greatest health benefits come with the introduction of regular amounts of moderate exercise, for example, 30 minutes of brisk walking daily.
- Making small changes to your daily routine, for example taking the stairs rather than the lift or walking to work or the shops rather than taking the car, are equally beneficial to your health as planned exercise.

---

#### DIABETES NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED

NATIONAL OFFICE: WILFORD HOUSE, 115 MOLESWORTH STREET, P.O. BOX 12-441, WELLINGTON

PHONE (64) 4 499 7143, FACSIMILE (64) 4 499 7146

EMAIL [diabetes@diabetes.org.nz](mailto:diabetes@diabetes.org.nz) INTERNET [www.diabetes.org.nz](http://www.diabetes.org.nz) INFORMATION 0800 DIABETES

## 1.6 YOU THINK YOU'RE TOO TIRED?

- Regular physical activity will actually give you more energy. Toning your muscles and conditioning your heart, lungs and blood vessels will give you more energy to handle the work and stress of daily life.

## 1.7 YOU FEEL DISCOURAGED?

- Everyone has times when they feel low. However, exercise has been demonstrated to improve your mood. If you can get over the first barrier of making a start you will often find that regular exercise will make you feel more optimistic and happier.

## 2. SET REALISTIC GOALS AND REWARD YOURSELF

- **Goals help give shape to your plan.** They give you something specific to work toward. Reaching a goal marks your success and makes you feel good. Setting new goals keeps you going. Start out by asking yourself why you plan to exercise – is it to lose weight, or relieve stress etc. This is your overall goal.
- Once overall goals are set, then **set realistic short-term goals for physical activity.** It is often better to commit to an extra ten minutes of physical activity per day and achieve it than set a goal that you cannot currently achieve. And remember if you're starting out, start small and increase gradually.
- **Keep a daily record of your achievements** – such as a diary, on your calendar, or if using a pedometer, use the daily activity log to set your goals and record your progress.
- And **reward yourself for achieving your goals.**

## 3. SOME PRACTICAL TIPS FOR KEEPING MOTIVATED

- Choose enjoyable activities. You are more likely to keep these up.
- Vary the type of activity to prevent boredom setting in.
- Be active with your friends or family. This way you can motivate and encourage one another.
- When setting your short-term goals remember to start small and gradually increase.
- Note down any barriers you have to exercise. That will help you build strategies to overcome them.
- Treat your “exercise” time as a “not negotiable” time in your day.

## 4. USE A PEDOMETER

Pedometers are useful tools to help you start out with physical activity for the first time and achieve your physical activity goals. Buy a pedometer and count the number of steps in your day. They are available from Diabetes Supplies Limited (0800 DIABETES) for \$10.00 only (subject to availability).

**Most adults do not have to consult their doctor before commencing moderate-intensity physical activity. However for people with diabetes, heart disease, or any complications of diabetes it is advisable to consult a doctor and your diabetes team before starting a programme of physical activity.**

---

### DIABETES NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED

NATIONAL OFFICE: WILFORD HOUSE, 115 MOLESWORTH STREET, P.O. BOX 12-441, WELLINGTON

PHONE (64) 4 499 7143, FACSIMILE (64) 4 499 7146

EMAIL [diabetes@diabetes.org.nz](mailto:diabetes@diabetes.org.nz) INTERNET [www.diabetes.org.nz](http://www.diabetes.org.nz) INFORMATION 0800 DIABETES