

# How do you define exercise?

When you hear the word *exercise*, what comes to mind? If you're like most people, "exercise" conjures images of people who are super fit and trim spending hours each day running and lifting weights at the gym. But let's be honest – for most of us, this type of exercise routine is simply not practical or feasible. So, now is the time to erase those images of exercise from your mind. We're going to broaden our perspective to think about physical activity in a whole new way.

**Myth #1: Exercise has to be vigorous to be beneficial for my health.** The current recommendations actually emphasize accumulating moderate activity throughout the week. So, what is moderate activity? Anything that's brisk enough to get your heart pumping and make you break a sweat but not so intense that you can't still carry on a conversation.

**Myth #2: In order for exercise to be beneficial, I have to work out for a long time.** You do not have to complete your physical activity in long sessions. Most days you will not be able to set aside 30-60 minutes for exercise. That doesn't mean you can't fit physical activity into your life! You can break it up into bouts as short as 10 minutes and accumulate activity throughout the day this way. The key is to be creative and find ways to fit activity into your existing schedule.

**Myth #3: I have to go to a gym or fitness center to exercise.** While public exercise facilities offer lots of great equipment, classes, and knowledgeable personnel, they are by no means a necessity. There are many things you can do at home with little or no equipment.



When we consider the three myths we have just debunked, a common theme emerges: physical activity does not have to be planned, structured activity that cuts into your busy schedule. While this is the way *exercise* is traditionally defined, *physical activity* is anything that gets your muscles working and your heart pumping. Engaging in physical activity during your leisure time is just one way to be active. You can also accumulate physical activity as part of your job, for transportation, or as part of your household and caregiving responsibilities. Always be thinking about the little things you can do to build more activity into your day. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- ❖ Do a free cable on-demand workout for 10 minutes first thing in the morning
- ❖ Put on your favorite music and dance around the house while you do chores
- ❖ Check out some exercise DVDs at the local library and try a variety of programs to find out which you like the best
- ❖ If you have a treadmill or elliptical at home, record your favorite TV shows and only allow yourself to watch them while you're working out
- ❖ Try an active video game
- ❖ Walk or bike to work
- ❖ Print as you go rather than waiting until you have a bunch of stuff to print at once; then send your documents to a network printer on the opposite side of your office/building
- ❖ Keep athletic shoes at the office so you can go for a quick walk on your lunch break or whenever you need to clear your head
- ❖ Stand up while you make/take phone calls
- ❖ Do crunches or push-ups after you send an email
- ❖ Tear out the exercise pages from a fitness magazine and keep them all in a folder. Then pull a few pages out and try something different each day.
- ❖ Set an alarm to go off every hour, and get up and move around for a few minutes every time the alarm goes off
- ❖ Start a pedometer challenge with coworkers
- ❖ Suggest walking/standing meetings at work

