

## Working out at home <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

I would really like to work out at home. I am a 22 year old full-time college student, who also works 30 hours a week as a hair stylist. I do have some evenings a week I can work out at home for 30 minutes to an hour, but I just don't know what all there is to do without any machines, and little exercise videos on hand. I was always in sports in high school so I was in great shape, but now I am 20-30 pounds overweight and I really want to change that. I've been doing great with my dieting, but I just really want to work out. Do you have any suggestions as far as a routine for me to shed the weight?

Thank you

## **Answer**

Dear Reader,

Creating an at-home physical activity program is a great way to get or stay fit, especially if you have limited time and resources. The good news is that there are ways that you can meet the recommended amount of physical activity without ever stepping in a gym or using machines! Whether you prefer to do a self-led routine or prefer to follow an instructor, you have options.

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans <sup>[2]</sup> recommends that adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity <sup>[3]</sup> or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity throughout each week, in addition to muscle-strengthening activities at least two days each week. Doing so will not only help maintain a healthy weight, but also stave off a host of medical conditions <sup>[4]</sup>. Moderate intensity might include a brisk walk, whereas vigorous intensity might involve running or swimming. And, if the thought of getting in all these minutes has you breakin? a sweat, no need to fret! You can break up your sessions into ten minute increments to make it more manageable and still reap the benefits. When planning your strengthening activities, focus on working each of your large muscle groups (which include the back, legs, hips, abdomen, shoulders, chest, and arms) throughout the week.

Need some ideas to help you get into the groove? One way to incorporate aerobic and strengthening activities in a home-based workout is by alternating between cardio and strength training exercises. For example, you can try doing jumping jacks for two minutes then do push-ups for one minute. Follow this up by repeating jumping jacks for two minutes and doing lunges for one minute, etc. In this type of circuit, you integrate aerobic movements with various strengthening activities in an efficient routine. Other examples of at-home aerobic

activities include walking, marching, jogging in place and jumping rope. Sit-ups, squats, and leg lifts can be done at home to strengthen muscles without the need for special equipment. If these self-led activities aren't for you, you might look into purchasing DVDs or streaming videos online (check out [How to choose/use exercise DVDs](#) [5] for some tips on how to find one that'll meet your needs). A key factor in sustaining a fitness routine is to find something you like. If you aren't sure what that might be, try a few different activities to see which ones you enjoy.

In addition to working out at home, it can be easy to get moving while going about your everyday life. For example, if you use public transportation, get off the bus or train a few stops early and walk the rest of the way. If you're able, taking the stairs instead of the elevator is a good option as well. And, if you find an extra hour in your day, a brisk 30-minute walk or jog outdoors is a great way to fit in cardio while leaving you 30 minutes to freshen up and get ready for your next activity! If staying motivated is a factor, try to set a reasonable goal for yourself and keep notes on your progress. Buddying up with a pal to work out together may help keep you accountable and help you both stay on track to meet your physical activity goals.

Lastly, you may find it helpful to speak with your health care provider before increasing your physical activity, particularly if you have any pre-existing medical conditions. They can give you some tips on how to reach your goals without compromising your health or safety. Reader, you also mentioned that you've got a handle on eating healthy. However, if you'd like to focus more on fueling your body for this added energy expenditure, the [MyPlate](#) [6] initiative is a great resource for finding healthy ways to do just that. You can also set up an appointment with a registered dietitian for even more personally-tailored dietary advice.

Congrats on the progress you've made so far. You're off to a great start, so keep it up!

Alice!

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