

It's All About Balance: Eat Smart, Move More, Rest Well

4 Fun Ways to Enjoy A Balanced Fitness Routine

Get your heart pumping with aerobic activities.

When many people think exercise, they think of an aerobic activity, like running or biking. Both are great aerobic activities. Some people really like them. But, they are just two ways to get your heart pumping. An aerobic activity is any activity that makes you breathe faster and harder. Fast walking, playing basketball, dancing or skipping are also aerobic activities. Aim for a total of 30 to 60 minutes per day, at least five days a week.

Build your muscles with strength activities.

Strength training isn't just for muscle men with big barbells anymore. Age-appropriate strength training is vital for all ages. Even people in their 90s can improve muscular fitness. There are many different ways to improve strength. At the gym or fitness center, you can use free weights or machines. At home, try using resistance bands or full water bottles. Aim for some strengthen activities two to three times a week. Rest for a day in between.



Stay flexible with stretching activities.

Aerobic and strength activities let your muscles contract and flex. Stretching activities give you the balance your muscles need to stay strong and flexible. It is best to do some stretching every time you do some other activity. You can do a few arm stretches after lifting weights. You can do some leg stretches after walking. Yoga and tai chi classes (or videos) are great ways to enjoy the benefits of a full-body stretch.

Keep your core strong with balance activities.

Being able to maintain your body's balance is important at all ages. It is even more critical as we get older. Losing one's balance is a common cause of injury. Your core muscles are in your back, belly and pelvis. They give you core strength for everyday balance. Like all your muscles, the core muscles need strength, stretching and practice to work best. Yoga, Pilates and balance ball activities are great ways to practice balance and build a strong core.

Think Safety First! In all physical activities, safety should be your number one thought. An accident or injury can sideline you quickly. If you are not sure that you can do an activity, check with your health care provider first. Need some free tips to get started? Visit the Mayo Clinic Web site for doctor-approved advice at www.mayoclinic.com/health/fitness_training/HQ01305.