

Starting to Exercise Safely

For joints, bones and general health

WHAT YOU ARE AIMING FOR

150 minutes of moderate activity a week — that is 30 minutes on 5 days, and it can be broken into three 10-minute pieces. "Moderate" means you can talk but not sing. Plus **strengthening exercise twice a week**, and for older adults, **balance work** most days. If that sounds impossible today, start with 5 minutes. **Something is enormously better than nothing.**

How to begin

- **Start lower and go slower than you think you need to.** The commonest reason people give up is doing too much in week one and hurting for a week after.
- Increase by **no more than 10% a week** — in time, distance or weight.
- **Warm up** for 5 minutes with easy movement, and cool down with gentle stretching.
- Be **regular rather than heroic.** Twenty minutes five days a week beats two hours on Sunday.

Good choices if your joints hurt

Walking on level ground in good shoes · **swimming or walking in water** — the best option for painful knees and hips, since water takes the load · **stationary cycling** with the seat high enough · **yoga and tai chi** for balance and flexibility, avoiding deep knee positions.

Weight-bearing exercise is what builds bone — walking, stair climbing, dancing and light weights. Swimming is excellent for joints but does little for bone density, so combine it with walking.

THE TWO-HOUR RULE

Some ache during and after exercise is normal and expected. But **if the pain is worse two hours after you finish, or the next morning, you did too much.** Cut back to about half next time and build up more slowly. Do not stop altogether.

STOP AND SEEK ADVICE IF YOU GET

Chest pain or tightness · unusual breathlessness · dizziness or fainting · an irregular or racing heartbeat · sudden sharp joint pain or a joint giving way · new swelling in a joint

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