2
Get set
We hope you agree that regular physical activity is important and that you’re ready to take action! This chapter is all about getting organised. It offers tips for helping you become more active, choosing activities and fitting them into your daily routine, and getting the most from your activities safely.

The key is to know your starting point and build slowly from there. Knowing your starting point will help you pick activities that are comfortable and realistic for you. Setting goals and having the right tools and equipment will help you to be successful. This guide is also accompanied by a workbook. Wherever you see the workbook icon, turn to the workbook for tools to help your physical activity planning and progression.

**Identifying your starting point**

Think about a typical weekday and weekend. How much time do you spend sitting? How much time are you active? When you’re up and moving, what kinds of activities are you doing?

To help you figure out your activity level, try filling in an activity log in the workbook. For a couple of weekdays and a weekend, keep track of how much time you are physically active. Write down how much time you spend doing each activity.

You can use the last column of the activity log to write down some ways you think you can add activities to your daily routine. If you’re not active yet, aim for a modest beginning and build from there. If you are already pretty active, then you can be more ambitious about adding to your activities.

**Quitting smoking**

**A good reason to quit**

Smoking harms almost every organ in your body, but because it happens gradually, you probably don’t notice. The best thing a smoker can do for their health is to quit. Quitting at any age is beneficial, increases life expectancy and improves quality of life. The benefits to quitting start immediately, with noticeable improvements in the first 72 hours.

**How to quit**

Discuss quitting smoking with a health professional, such as a general practitioner, pharmacist or community health worker, or call the Quitline 13 QUIT (13 7848). The Quitline is a statewide confidential telephone service dedicated to helping people who want to quit smoking, and is available seven days a week, to offer support, encouragement and resources to help all smokers quit.

Go here for more information

Examples of the four types of physical activity can be found on page 12.
Setting your goals

Many people find that having a firm goal motivates them to move ahead on a project. Goals are most useful when they are specific, realistic and important to you. Consider both short and long-term goals. Your success depends on setting realistic goals that really matter to you.

Short-term goals will help you make physical activity a regular part of your daily life. For these goals, think about the things you’ll need to get or do to be physically active. For example, you may need to buy walking shoes or fill out an activity log (see workbook) so you can figure out how to fit physical activity into your busy day. Make sure your short-term goals will really help you be active.

Here are a few examples of short-term goals:

- Today, I will decide to be more active.
- Tomorrow, I will find out about exercise classes in my area.
- By the end of this week, I will talk with my friend about exercising with me a couple of times a week.
- On the weekend, I will make sure I have the shoes and comfortable clothes I need to start being more active.
- By the 25th, I will start going to the exercise class.

If you’re already active, think of short-term goals to increase your level of physical activity. For example, over the next week or two, you may want to move gradually from walking to brisk walking or jogging, increase the amount of weight you lift or try a new kind of physical activity.

No matter what your starting point, reaching your short-term goals will make you feel good and give you confidence to progress toward your long-term goals.

To help you get started, you can write down your goals by using the goal-setting worksheet in the workbook. Put your list of goals where you can see them and review them regularly.

After you write down your short-term goals, you can then identify your long-term goals. Focus on where you want to be in six months, a year or two years from now. Long-term goals also should be realistic, personal and important to you. Here are a few examples:

- By this time next year, I will swim a kilometre three times a week.
- Next summer, I will be able to play backyard cricket with my grandchildren.
- In six months, I will have my blood pressure under control by increasing my physical activity and following my doctor’s advice.

Add your own long-term goals to the goal-setting worksheet in your workbook.
Make it routine

For Sam, being able to do the things he enjoys doing motivates him to be active every day:

‘I started regular physical activity way back in 1960. I decided I wanted to stay fit and healthy as I got older and so I joined a gym. Today I’m still lifting weights to stay fit. I get up every day and lift weights, followed by stretching and some balance exercises. In the evening, I do the same routine for about 15 minutes. I was a drummer by profession and being active keeps my muscles strong and lets me continue to drum.’

Go here for more information
See pages 18, 27 and 28.

Make it safe

For many people, even those who are regularly active, breaks in the routine mean the end of daily physical activity and its benefits. Maria tells how she carefully got started again:

‘For more than 10 years, I jogged every day to clear the cobwebs and get my blood flowing. Imagine how awful I felt when I fell down the stairs and broke my ankle. At 54, I wasn’t ready to be a couch potato. After the cast came off, I had physiotherapy. I worried about hurting my ankle again, but I wasn’t going to let the injury keep me down. At first, I walked slowly in my neighbourhood, but didn’t want to trip on uneven footpaths. My physiotherapist suggested I try a treadmill instead. Now, I go to the gym after work. I set the treadmill incline high, turn on my headphones and walk. Sometimes, I listen to music or a book on CD. I miss the fresh air, but I don’t think about falling and my stamina is back. Plus, I’ve added strength and balance exercises to my routine. In many ways, I’m in better shape now than before the fall and that feels great!’
Writing a plan

Some people find that writing a physical activity plan helps them keep their promise to be active. See if this works for you. Be sure the plan is realistic for you to do. You can update your plan as you gain experience in how to be active. You might even make a contract with a friend or family member to carry out your plan. Involving another person can help you keep your commitment.

Make your plan specific and grounded in your goals. For each physical activity you choose, include:

• what kind of activity you plan to do
• why you want to do it
• when you will do it
• where you will do it.

Choose activities of interest to you and add some variety to your plan. Start out with realistic activities based on how physically active you are now. Don’t expect to go from couch potato to super athlete right away.

Regularly review and update your plan and long-term goals so that you can build on your success. You can use the weekly physical activity plan in your workbook to write down your planned activities. Get a friend or health professional to see how realistic your plan really is.

When it comes to motivation, the first few months are crucial. If you can stick with physical activities you enjoy, it’s a good sign you will be able to make physical activity a regular part of your everyday life.

Quick tips

There are many ways to fit physical activity into your regular routine:

• Try something new:
  — Take up a new active hobby such as pilates or kayaking.

• Rethink your priorities:
  — How important is watching TV? How about a short walk or doing some strength exercises while watching?

• Work harder at the things you already do:
  — Rake the leaves instead of using the grasscatcher.
  — Walk to the local shop to get the paper instead of having it delivered.
  — Don’t forget to build rewards into your plan. For each goal you reach, treat yourself to something special — a new CD to dance to, or a walk and picnic in the park.
**Being safe**

There's a way for almost every older adult to be active safely and get meaningful health benefits. **It is recommended that you talk with your doctor or health professional** if you aren’t used to energetic activity, are planning to significantly increase your physical activity or want to start a vigorous activity program.

You should also talk with your doctor if you have any existing conditions or health problems. Your doctor or health professional can help you choose activities that are best for you and reduce any risks.

Here are a few things you may want to discuss with your doctor or health professional:

- Ask whether there are any specific exercises or activities you should avoid. An illness or surgery may affect how you exercise. For example, if you’ve had hip or back problems or surgery, you may need to modify or avoid some exercises. It is important to know how to be active safely if you have high blood pressure, diabetes or cardiovascular disease.

- Ask your doctor or health professional how to increase your physical activity gradually.

- Ask questions so you understand how any ongoing health conditions might affect physical activity. For example, people with arthritis may need to avoid some types of activity, especially when joints are swollen or inflamed. Those with diabetes may need to adjust their daily schedule, meal plan or medications when planning their activities.

If your doctor or health professional does not recommend a particular physical activity, ask them what particular concerns they have and if there are different activities you can do instead.

It is important to talk about any unexplained or new symptoms you haven’t yet discussed. For example, chest pain or pressure, fluttery or racing heart, painful or swollen joints, dizziness, shortness of breath, recent back, hip or eye surgery, unplanned weight loss or sores that won’t heal. Postpone exercise until the problem is diagnosed and treated. (See page 26 about getting back to regular physical activity after a break.)

Your level of physical activity is an important topic to discuss with your doctor or health professional as part of your ongoing preventive health care. Ask your doctor if you are eligible for a free preventive health check.
Your shoes are an important part of your physical activity routine. Consider shoes that will help prevent you from tripping or falling. Choose and wear shoes that are appropriate for your feet and suit your activities. Here are a few tips to keep in mind.

- Choose shoes that are made for the type of physical activity you want to do (walking, running, dancing, bowling, tennis).
- Look for shoes with:
  — firm, flat, non-skid soles that bend mainly at the ball of the foot
  — good heel support
  — a shape that conforms to the shape of your foot and is held on by laces, zips or velcro fastenings.
- Make sure your shoes fit well and provide proper support for your feet. This is especially important if you have diabetes or arthritis.
- Shoes should feel comfortable right from the start.
- Think of your shoes as safety equipment for your feet. Check them regularly and replace them when they're worn out. You need new shoes when:
  — the tread on the bottom is worn down
  — your feet (especially your arches) feel tired after activity
  — your shins, knees, or hips hurt after activity.
- Talk with a health professional, such as a podiatrist or physiotherapist, about any concerns you have about your feet or footwear. Ask them about specialist shoe stores that may have shoes that would be suitable for you.

Get walking safely when out and about

Remember the following safety rules and enjoy your walk!

- Always walk facing oncoming traffic.
- Walk on footpaths and cross roads at designated areas wherever possible.
- If there is no footpath, look for a smooth, stable surface alongside the road.
- If there are guardrails, see if there's a smooth, flat surface behind the barrier where you can walk.
- If you need to walk on the shoulder, stay as far away from traffic as possible.
- Be sure drivers can see you. Wear brightly coloured clothing, and if you walk during low-light hours — dusk or dawn — be sure you have reflective material on your jacket or walking shoes and carry a torch.
- Take along a mobile phone and some identification, especially if walking alone.

Quick tip

Some people with diabetes may need special shoes or shoe inserts to prevent serious foot problems. Medicare may provide a rebate on podiatrist fees if you have a chronic condition and are referred by your doctor. Your doctor or podiatrist can tell you how to get these special shoes.
The health benefits of physical activity far outweigh any risks of injury. However, you can take precautions to be active safely. You may feel some minor discomfort or muscle soreness when you start to exercise. This should go away as you get used to the activities. However, if you feel sick to your stomach or have strong pain, you’ve done too much. Go easier and then gradually build up.

**Preventing injury**

The health benefits of physical activity far outweigh any risks of injury. However, you can take precautions to be active safely. You may feel some minor discomfort or muscle soreness when you start to exercise. This should go away as you get used to the activities. However, if you feel sick to your stomach or have strong pain, you’ve done too much. Go easier and then gradually build up.

**Tips to avoid injury**

- When starting to increase your physical activity, begin slowly with low-intensity activities.
- Wait at least two hours after eating a large meal before doing strenuous physical activity.
- Wear appropriate shoes for your activity and comfortable, loose-fitting clothing that allow you to move freely but won’t catch on other objects.
- Warm up with low-intensity exercises at the beginning of each physical activity session.
- Drink water before, during and after your physical activity session (don’t wait until you are thirsty).
- When exercising outdoors, pay attention to your surroundings — consider possible traffic hazards, the weather, uneven walking surfaces and strangers.
- Do some stretching exercises after your activity to help avoid muscle soreness and injury.

**Stop exercising if you:**

- have pain or pressure in your chest, neck, shoulder or arm
- feel dizzy or sick to your stomach
- break out in a cold sweat
- have muscle cramps
- feel severe pain in joints, feet, ankles or legs.
# Finding a fitness professional

If you’re not used to exercising, you may want to work with a fitness professional, especially at first to ensure you are exercising correctly. This could range from a personal trainer to a qualified instructor at a council-run group activity in the park.

Here are a few questions to help you choose a fitness professional who will meet your individual needs. If you can answer YES to most of these questions, you’re probably on the right track.

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<th>Education and Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the fitness professional have a Certificate IV in Fitness from a registered fitness training organisation and registration with Fitness Australia?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the fitness professional have at least two years of experience, including experience training people your age?</td>
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<td>Will the fitness professional be able to develop a physical activity program based on your goals, abilities and health?</td>
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<td>Has the fitness professional worked with people with your medical conditions? (if applicable)</td>
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<td>Does the fitness professional know how to personalise your physical activities based on medications you take? (if applicable)</td>
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<th>Personality</th>
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<tr>
<td>Does the fitness professional listen carefully to you and answer your questions?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the fitness professional have a sense of humour and a personality you like?</td>
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<th>Business practices</th>
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<td>Has the fitness professional told you what to expect from the sessions?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Are the costs of the sessions and the cancellation policy clearly stated?</td>
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<td>Is the fitness professional insured?</td>
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