

# Get Moving and Reap The Rewards



*This is the fifth article in a series focusing on cardiovascular disease presented by DeKalb Medical.*

**R**egular exercise is a vital part of staying healthy. In fact, according to the American Heart Association, an inactive lifestyle is one of the five major risk factors for cardiovascular disease, along with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking and obesity. As many as 250,000 deaths per year in the United States can be attributed to a lack of regular physical activity.

Why is being physically active so important? Exercise gives you some control over how healthy your heart is. Regular physical activity strengthens your heart and causes it to work more effectively. What you do, what you eat and your lifestyle choices can actually change how your heart works. This, in turn, can protect you from:

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Certain types of cancer
- Obesity
- Back pain
- Osteoporosis

Exercise can also help you build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints and can speed up your metabolism. It promotes psychological well-being and decreases stress and anxiety. Regular exercise can help older adults become stronger and better able to get around without the risk of falling.

So, how often and in what ways should you exercise? Most adults need at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity at least five days a week. Aerobic activity is any activity that improves the way your body uses oxygen. By working your heart muscle and strengthening it, blood and oxygen are pumped through your body more effectively. Moderate intensity means that you are working at a level that increases your heart rate and breathing. Some great examples

of moderate intensity aerobic exercises include brisk walking, swimming, dancing and bicycling.

If you can't do 30 minutes of exercise at once, break it down into shorter periods. Walk the stairs at work, do some gardening or mow the lawn. All forms of physical activity are beneficial to your body.

You don't have to do 30 consecutive minutes of activity to reap the rewards of exercise. You can do a little bit at a time as long as it adds up to 30 minutes in one day.

If you are just beginning to work exercise into your life, start simply by adding a little physical activity into your day whenever you can. You may try walking around the block before you go to work or taking a bike ride in the evening. Try out different activities and see what works for you. You can try exercising alone for some peace and quiet or workout with a friend. You can also compare exercising at home, outside or at the gym. Once you've tried some different ways, stick with whatever makes exercising the most enjoyable for you.

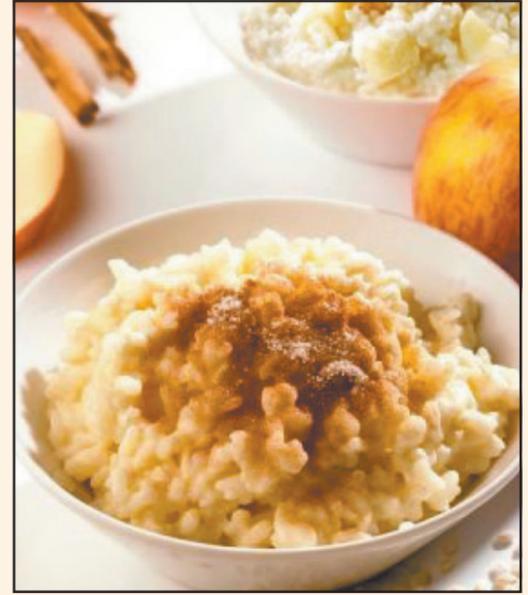
Finally, set specific, easily attainable goals so you don't set yourself up for failure. Don't pledge to run 5 days per week when you're only able to walk 2 days. Reward yourself when you reach a goal. That gives you something to look forward to and reminds you of your success.

Working exercise into your already busy life may seem like a tough challenge to meet, but the health benefits you will reap are well worth the effort. People who exercise regularly live longer and feel better. The key is to find the right exercise for you.



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## Healthy Rice Pudding



Cinnamon, apples and pears add a distinctive fruity flavor to this healthy treat.

- 4 cups low-fat milk
- 1 cup brown rice
- 2-3 cinnamon sticks
- Pinch of salt
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- Pinch of nutmeg
- 1/4 cup nonfat vanilla yogurt
- 2 apples, peeled and diced
- 1 pear, peeled and diced
- Ground cinnamon (optional)

In heavy saucepan, bring milk, rice, cinnamon sticks and salt to simmer. Reduce heat to low. Cover and gently simmer until rice is very tender and milk is almost absorbed, stirring occasionally (about 1 hour). Add sugar, vanilla and nutmeg and stir to blend over low heat until mixture is very thick (about 15 minutes). Remove cinnamon sticks. Stir yogurt and 3/4 of fruit into rice pudding. Transfer to large bowl. Top with remaining fruit. Serve warm.

*Source: American Institute for Cancer Research*