

Beginning Exercise Plans for the Obese

By Allen Smith, eHow User



Like most other adults, people who are obese or overweight can benefit from a quality [exercise](#) program designed to manage their weight, increase aerobic endurance, lower blood pressure and make positive changes to their [health](#). However, unlike others who are already hovering around their ideal weight, obese individuals have special needs, needs that are important to address to avoid physical injuries and medical mishaps.

Getting a Physical Examination

If you're obese or overweight, the first step you should take before beginning an exercise program is to make an appointment with your physician for a complete physical examination. Your doctor needs to know that you're about to embark on a regular exercise program. Chances are, in addition to taking a health history and performing a physical examination, he will order a comprehensive blood lipid panel, take a resting EKG and refer you to an exercise specialist.

Your doctor will also ask you about any current orthopedic problems you have. Be honest. Let him know if you're plagued by sore knees, arthritis or lower back pain. You'll also need to communicate this to your exercise specialist before you begin. It will have important implications regarding what type of [exercises](#) you choose and how you progress.

Help Is on the Way

Beginning an exercise program can be challenging for anyone but it's especially daunting to obese people because they have so many unique needs. For these reasons, it's a good idea to enlist the help of a qualified exercise specialist or personal trainer. Not only will you get the specific kind of advice you need, he or she will help you to stick to a schedule, the most difficult part of beginning an exercise program. You can find certified exercise specialists at your local hospital, fitness club or by contacting the American College of Sports Medicine.

Choosing the Best Exercise

Obese and overweight individuals have special needs. They carry additional weight on their bodies 24 hours a day, 365 days a year that places extraordinary demands on their musculoskeletal and cardiovascular systems. For many, the best place to start a fitness program is in the pool. The water works with the natural buoyancy of their additional fat to help relieve stress from the ankles, knees and hips. If the thought of swimming laps turns you off, look into water aerobics classes at your gym. The pool is a great place to begin an exercise program.

Other good exercise choices are none weight-bearing activities like bicycling. Look for activities that are gentle on the muscles but demanding on the lungs. After your first month in your exercise program, discuss alternative modes of exercise with your trainer. It's a good idea to have several things you can do --- indoors or outdoors. Look for things you can do on the road. Don't let business travel or your vacation derail your exercise program.

How Long and How Far

Regardless of what exercises you choose, you'll approach them the same way. Start slowly, progress slowly and stay consistent. According to the American

College of Sports Medicine, adults should get a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week to maintain health and fitness. Your weight-loss program places added demands to your day, so start thinking about how you're going to fit 20 to 30 minutes of exercise into your daily schedule. Enlist the help of your family and friends to help you be successful.

Begin by exercising 10 to 15 minutes at a time. If you can manage more, all the better. Listen to your body and avoid putting undue stress on your musculoskeletal system, especially in the beginning. As you adapt to your new activity, add 10 percent of time per week to your routine. Continue until you can exercise continually for an hour.

Adding Weight to the Equation

After you've passed the first hurdle of sticking with a consistent aerobic exercise program for several months, start adding 10 to 15 minutes of weight training to your routine several times a week. Weight training will not only burn more calories while you exercise, it will also build more metabolically active muscle tissue that will help you to shed the extra pounds.