

How to Develop a Physical Fitness Program

By Allen Smith, eHow User

If your doctor has told you that you need to lose weight or you've just made it a personal goal, you're in good company. According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, approximately two-thirds of the American population is overweight or obese. Being overweight can lead to serious complications, such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and some forms of cancer. To correct the situation, you'll need to work with your physician, a registered dietitian and an [exercise](#) specialist.

Difficulty: Moderate

Instructions

- 1 Make an appointment with your [family](#) physician for a physical--especially if you're over 40 or have never exercised before. In addition to your weight, he'll measure your blood pressure, body circumferences and draw blood for a comprehensive lipid analysis. The lipid analysis will tell you whether your total cholesterol, HDL, LDL, glucose and triglycerides are within normal limits. If it has been some time since you've exercised, your doctor may also order a resting or [exercising](#) EKG to watch how your heart responds.
- 2 Go over the results with your physician and make a list of three to six things you'd like to improve within the next six months. You may also want confer with a registered dietitian to improve your diet.
- 3 Establish specific things you'd like to accomplish, such as add one inch to your biceps or lose two inches from your waist. It could be to lose weight, build muscle, become more flexible or all of the above. If you've never exercised before or had limited luck achieving goals on your own, you might want to enlist the help of a certified fitness expert. You can find them through your hospital's physical therapy department or your local gym. Determine what you goals should be at one, three, six and 12 months.
- 4 Create a program that consists of aerobic exercise, joint flexibility and weight training. Though it might seem like a lot to squeeze into a limited amount of time, if you break the exercises into a regular schedule, you'll find you'll be able to accomplish all of your activities. For instance, devote 20 to 30 minutes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to walking, running or swimming. After each aerobic session, you'll follow with five to 10 minutes of flexibility exercises. After you get started, you may enjoy it so much you decide to devote two of the days to Pilates. At least two of the days of the week should be devoted to weight training. Depending on the amount of time you have to spend, divide the body into three parts: the upper extremities, midsection and lower extremities.
- 5 Review your progress with your physician, dietitian and exercise specialist after six months. Look for areas that you've made the most and least progress with. Also think about which types of activities you enjoy the most. Ask all of your health-care specialists for new goals for the final six months of the year. Ask your doctor for another blood lipid analysis to see whether your fitness program has made positive changes to your cholesterol, HDL, LDL and triglycerides.

Tips & Warnings

- Begin with a complete physical examination and use this as your baseline.
- Start slowly and increase your pace approximately 10 percent per week.
- Avoid progressing too quickly.
- Go slow, developing lifelong habits.