

# STARTING OUT WITH EXERCISE

You've made the decision to get active. Congratulations! Whether your goal is better health, more energy, stress relief, or just feeling stronger, beginning an exercise routine is one of the best things you can do for your body and mind.

But here's the thing: many people dive in with enthusiasm, only to crash after a few intense sessions due to soreness, fatigue, or even injury. That's not because exercise is bad – it's because their approach was too much, too soon.

To help you start strong and stay on track, it's good to understand some basic principles about what happens in your body when you exercise, the benefits of progressively increasing your fitness over time, what a balanced exercise routine looks like and some safety recommendations.

## What Happens to Your Body When You Exercise?

When you move your body, especially in ways it's not used to, your muscles experience tiny micro-tears. This is a normal part of the muscle-building and strengthening process. Your body responds by repairing and rebuilding those fibres, making your muscles more resilient over time.

But when you push your body too hard, too soon, those micro-tears can lead to:

- Inflammation
- Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness (DOMS)
- Joint stress or strain
- Fatigue and burnout

That's why a gentle, gradual build-up is key – it gives your body time to adapt and strengthen safely.

## Why You Should Start Slow (and Not Skip the Basics)

It's tempting to jump into a high-intensity routine, especially if you're motivated. But sustainable fitness isn't about doing the most... It's about doing what's right for your current fitness level.

Benefits of a gradual approach:

- Prevents injuries and overtraining
- Builds a strong foundation of movement and coordination
- Helps form long-term habits instead of short-term struggles
- Supports better recovery, sleep, and mood
- Reduces the chance of feeling discouraged or quitting

Think of it like building a house – you need a solid foundation before you add the walls and roof.



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## What Does a Balanced Exercise Routine Look Like?

When you're starting out, your goal should be consistency, not intensity. A well-rounded routine includes:

### Cardiovascular Exercise

This gets your heart rate up and boosts endurance. Start with:

- Brisk walking
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Low-impact dance or aerobics

Start with 10–20 minutes, 3–4 days a week. Gradually increase time or intensity.

### Strength Training

Builds muscle, protects joints, and supports metabolism. Begin with:

- Bodyweight movements: squats, lunges, wall push-ups
- Resistance bands or light weights
- 1–2 sessions per week, focusing on form and control. Slow, controlled movements are better than fast or jerky repetitions.

You don't need to lift heavy or go to failure. The goal is to learn the movements and wake up dormant muscles.

### Flexibility and Mobility

Important for posture, joint health, and recovery. Try:

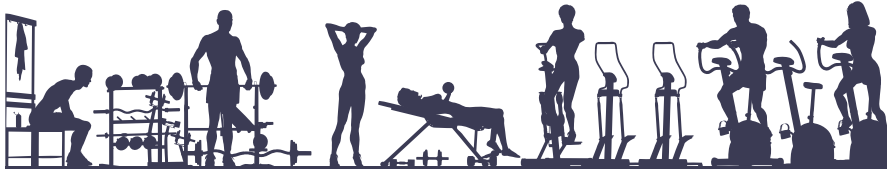
- Gentle stretching
- Yoga or Pilates
- Foam rolling or mobility drills

Include 5–10 minutes of stretching after your workouts or dedicate specific time to flexibility and balance training.

### Rest and Recovery

This is when the real transformation happens! Rest allows muscles to repair, grow stronger, and prevent injury.

- Take at least 1–2 full rest days per week
- Prioritize sleep, hydration, and protein-rich meals to support recovery



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## How to Get Started: Tips for Beginners

Starting small is not a weakness... It's a wise and practical strategy.

Here's how to begin in a way that works:

- Start with 10–15 minutes a day. Even a walk around the block counts.
- Choose what you enjoy. You're more likely to stick with activities you like: Dancing, swimming, playing with the kids, hiking, etc.
- Focus on quality, not quantity. Proper form reduces injury and builds confidence.
- Track your progress. Note how you feel, what you did, and celebrate small wins.
- Increase gradually. Add time, reps, or difficulty once the routine starts feeling easier.
- Listen to your body. Soreness is normal; sharp pain is not.
- Find support. Work out with a friend, join a beginner group, or follow a program online. It's always easier when you are not alone.

Remember: Be Kind to Yourself

Your fitness journey is not a race. It's not about how fast or how far you go. It's about showing up consistently, treating your body with care, and building a foundation that will serve you for life.

You don't have to be extreme – you just have to be consistent.



# BEGINNER'S EXERCISE CHECKLIST

If you are new to exercise, here's a simple checklist to remind you of the most important factors that will help you achieve your goals and feel successful in your fitness journey:

## Beginner's Exercise Checklist: Getting Started Safely

- ✓ Start small: 10–15 minutes of movement per day
- ✓ Warm up before workouts with gentle cardio or mobility
- ✓ Focus on good form, not speed or weight
- ✓ Include cardio, strength, and stretching each week
- ✓ Rest at least 1–2 days a week
- ✓ Stay hydrated, eat protein-rich foods and a wide variety of veggies
- ✓ Track your progress (not just the scale!)
- ✓ Gradually increase time, reps, or resistance
- ✓ Listen to your body and avoid pushing through pain
- ✓ Celebrate consistency and progress, not perfection

