

Exercise and Weight Control

What are the benefits of exercise?

The benefits of exercise can include:

- ✓ burning off calories and losing weight
- ✓ maintaining muscle tone
- ✓ improving circulation
- ✓ improving heart and lung function
- ✓ increasing your sense of self-control
- ✓ reducing your level of stress
- ✓ increasing your ability to concentrate
- ✓ improving your appearance
- ✓ reducing depression
- ✓ suppressing your appetite
- ✓ helping you sleep better
- ✓ preventing diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol
- ✓ decreasing your risk of some cancers, such as breast, ovary, and colon cancer

Exercise is an important part of any weight-loss or weight control program. It should become a permanent part of your lifestyle.

What type of exercise program is best for me?

Some people can lose weight by themselves, but most should seek help from a healthcare provider. Your provider will recommend the right kinds of exercise for you. Your provider may also refer you to a dietitian to plan your diet. A dietitian can teach you how to make healthier food choices and prepare meal plans that fit your specific diet needs. The goal of most diet and exercise plans is to help you lose 1 to 2 pounds a week.

As ways to gradually increase your physical activity, your provider may suggest that you:

- Walk every day.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Do errands on foot, if possible. If you need to drive, park farther away and walk to your destination.
- Go to a spa, gym, or exercise class. Water aerobic classes are especially good if you have back, knee, or joint problems.

Walking is a great way for almost everyone to increase the amount of time they exercise. Using a pedometer can be fun and motivating. A pedometer is a device that attaches to your clothing and tracks how many steps you take in a day. A good goal is to work up to 10,000 steps a day (5 miles). If your provider agrees, try increasing your steps each week by 500 a day until you reach 10,000 steps a day.

As you begin to exercise more, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Your goal is to begin a routine of physical activity that can become an enjoyable part of your life. Choose activities you enjoy, can afford, and can fit into your schedule.
- Use a chart that shows how many calories are burned in different physical activities to get ideas for types of exercise.
- Consider bicycling, walking briskly, or exercising at home with videotapes if you don't like sports or gyms. Team sports that involve long periods of sitting between play—for example, bowling—do not provide the level of physical activity needed for the best results. Exercise videos and DVDs are available for all levels of fitness, including people with disabilities. You can borrow them from your library, view them on exercise Web sites, or buy them at stores or on line.
- Build up slowly to a level of activity that makes you breathe more heavily, increases your heart rate, and makes you sweat. Do not do so much that you strain your muscles or feel dizzy or nauseated.
- A good exercise goal is to build up to at least 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) a week of moderate exercise, or 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) a week of vigorous activity. You might combine moderate and vigorous activity for a fun workout.
 - Try to exercise for at least 10 minutes at a time and spread your total workout time over the week. That means you might do 30-minute workouts, 5 times a week.
 - **Moderate exercise** means you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat. One way to tell is that you'll be able to talk, but not sing. Examples of moderate exercise are walking fast, doing water aerobics, or playing doubles tennis.
 - **Vigorous activity** means you're breathing hard and fast, and your heart rate has gone up quite a bit. If you're working at this level, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. Examples of activities that require vigorous effort are jogging, swimming laps, or playing singles tennis.
 - If your healthcare provider approves, get at least 5 hours (300 minutes) of moderate exercise or 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of vigorous activity a week to get more benefit from exercise and improve your ability to lose weight. This will also help you keep a healthy weight.
 - Older adults should try to follow these guidelines for exercise as much as their physical ability and health will allow.

- Do some form of strength training using gym equipment or your own body weight 2 or more days a week. The exercises should work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms). Strength training will make your muscles stronger and able to work longer without getting tired. Muscle mass burns more calories than fat so as your muscle increases, so does your ability to burn calories.
- Do warm-up exercises or gentle stretches before exercising. Do cool-down exercises afterward.
- Wear proper shoes and loose-fitting clothing.
- Drink extra water or sports drinks such as Gatorade when you exercise strenuously or in hot weather.
- Be sure to check with your healthcare provider before starting your exercise program.

To maintain your exercise program, follow these guidelines:

- Avoid setting your expectations too high. Start out slowly and build your stamina gradually.
- Find a friend to exercise with.
- Avoid being competitive. Try to improve on your last effort instead of comparing yourself with someone else.
- Recover completely from illness before resuming exercise. Then start with less exercise and increase the amount you do gradually to avoid injury.
- Remember that exercise needs to be continued throughout your life. Don't try to be too intense. Enjoy getting healthy. Have fun.

On behalf of Capital BlueCross, McKesson Health Solutions LLC (McKesson) assists in the administration of the Nurse Line program, and assists in the promotion of health and wellness by providing educational materials. McKesson is an independent company.

The Clinical Content you are receiving is McKesson proprietary information. Under copyright law, the Clinical Content may not be copied, distributed, or otherwise reproduced. Copyright 2008–2011 McKesson Health Solutions LLC. All Rights Reserved.

The Clinical Content provided is meant for a general audience. It is not a substitute for service or advice received from your health care providers who are the only ones that can diagnose and treat your individual medical conditions. The Clinical Content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available; however, neither McKesson nor Capital BlueCross assumes any liability associated with its use. McKesson and Capital BlueCross make no warranty as to the content of these materials or the information contained therein.