**Overcoming barriers**
If you haven't been very active in the past, the first couple of weeks might seem challenging or difficult. The good news is that once you get active, staying active is easier. Here are some creative ways to get started:

- Don’t think of it as exercise, think of it as getting moving. Try to find ways to work more physical activity into your daily routine.
- Have alternate plans for when the weather is bad, such as mall walking, window-shopping, using a workout video or indoor exercise machine.
- Find fun ways to turn social activities into physical activities you can do with your friends and family.

**Keeping on track**
Everyone gets off track once in a while. This can happen for many reasons—a change in your daily schedule, illness or injury, or simply feeling unmotivated. It’s important not to completely give up just because you miss a few days.

- Remind yourself that it’s OK to have a break in your activity once in a while.
- Invite someone to join you—a partner can be the best motivator.
- When first starting, you don’t have to overwhelm yourself, just try to be more active in what you’re already doing (taking the stairs, parking farther away, etc.)
- Keep a record of your physical activity. Tracking activity can be very motivating and will help to remind you of how far you’ve come.

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**Sample action plan for physical activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is my first goal?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the first step I will take toward reaching this goal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the date I will start?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are some things that might get in my way of success?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can I prevent these from becoming barriers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will support me in my goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How confident am I that I can follow my plan?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not at all confident       Very confident

If you are not confident you can follow this plan, re-think your goal. Be sure to choose a goal that is realistic and attainable for you.

**Special Considerations**
While everyone can benefit from regular physical activity, some people may need to take extra precautions. If you have special health concerns, ask your doctor to help you develop an action plan that is right for you.

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**Resources**

The Group Health Resource Line can provide more information on physical activity and other health topics. The Resource Line can also send you a free activity record card. Call weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. 1-800-992-2279, or contact us by e-mail at resource.l@ghc.org.

**Group Health Take Care Stores** sell books and videos on stretching and physical activity as well as pedometers and other exercise and wellness products. To find out the location of the retail stores, or to order by phone, call 1-800-447-2839. You can also visit the Take Care Stores online at www.take-care.com.

Visit the **Group Health Web site** at www.ghc.org and consult the Healthwise® Knowledgebase, available to all Group Health members.

**Zoo Walkers** is a walking program that meets two mornings a week at the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle. There is a small quarterly registration fee. For more information, call the Group Health Resource Line.

For Group Health Medicare enrollees with Part A & B Group Health offers the Senior Fitness Benefit for qualifying members. This benefit offers Group Health’s Medicare members free access to a variety of fitness programs. Call the Group Health Resource Line, or log on to the Group Health Web site, for more information.

This information is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider.

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**Get moving**

Tips for getting and staying active

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Getting started
If you haven’t been physically active on a regular basis, start slowly. Even a small amount of activity each day is an improvement.

Begin by looking for ways to add more physical activity to your daily routine.
- Take the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator.
- Walk instead of driving if you are only going a short distance.
- When you do drive, park a little further away from your destination.
- Look for opportunities to move around your house, such as mopping or vacuuming; or around the yard, like pulling weeds or mowing the lawn.
- Walk your dog or your neighbor’s dog.
- Try a pedometer. A pedometer measures the number of steps you take. It’s a great way to track and compare the number of steps you take daily. By setting goals, you will be able to come up with creative ways to add more steps into your day.

Think of fun activities you enjoy that will get you moving.
- Take a leisurely bike ride after dinner.
- Dance while you listen to music.
- Learn something new, like yoga or tai chi, ballroom or swing dancing, or even juggling.
- Enjoy activities with your friends and family, such as playing Frisbee, shooting hoops, bowling, or miniature golf.
- Think of the things you enjoyed as a kid: jumping rope, roller skating, twirling a Hula-Hoop, or going for a swim.

Build up to 30 minutes of physical activity on most days
After adding physical activity to your life, you can start looking for ways to increase the amount you’re getting each day. Some people find it helpful to create an “action plan” in order to achieve their goals.

Here are some things to consider when creating your action plan:
- Include activities that are realistic and that you look forward to.
  - If you want to spend more time with friends or family, your goal would be to set aside specific days and times each week for activities you can share. For example bowling on Wednesdays, or miniature golf on Sunday afternoons.
  - If you enjoy walking, your goal might be to walk for 30 minutes 4 to 5 days each week by the end of next month.
- Include specific steps, and gradually increase your level of activity to help you reach your goal.
  - If your goal is to add more activity to your daily routine, your first step might be to park a little further away from your destination every time you drive somewhere this week. Next week you might add to this by taking the stairs instead of the elevator.
  - If your goal is to walk 30 minutes on most days of the week, start by walking 15 minutes after dinner three days this week. Next week you can increase this to walking for 20 minutes. You can continue increasing your level of activity, and the number of days you do it, until you achieve your final goal of 30 minutes on most days.

Physical activity is vital to your health
Regular physical activity:
- Increases your energy level, improves your mood, and decreases stress and anxiety levels.
- Helps you sleep better, and makes it easier to maintain or lose weight.
- Reduces your risk for certain conditions, such as heart disease, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

Helpful hints for getting active
Don’t try to do too much too soon.
Apply the 10-percent rule: increase time, weight, or distance by about 10 percent each week.

Take time to warm up and cool down.
Start slowly, allowing your heart rate to increase gradually over a 5-minute period. When you’re finished exercising, decrease the level of intensity, allowing your heart rate to return to normal over a 5-minute period.

If you feel like you’re working too hard, you probably are.
If the activity feels too strenuous, slow down until you feel comfortable with the level of exertion.

If you have any of the following symptoms while exercising, slow down and stop:
- Faintness.
- Dizziness.
- Nausea.
- Chest tightness or pain.
- Major shortness of breath.
- Loss of muscle control.

If you are still experiencing these symptoms several minutes after you’ve stopped exercising, call your health care provider’s office.

When you reach your goal, give yourself a small reward and then set a new goal!