GoalTodo

Exercise more: from three 20-minute walks to 150 minutes a week

Exercise more

12 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, Feb 21

Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

Three 20-minute sessions

Get moving

- [ ] Brisk walk, or another moderate activity such as cycling, swimming or dancing
  20 minutes, at a pace where you can talk but not sing

Done when: You've moved for 20 minutes on three days this week

Sticking point: Finding the time. Put the three sessions in your calendar now, like appointments, and decide where you'll walk if it rains. If 20 minutes in one go is too much, two 10-minute walks on the same day count too.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

Twenty-five minutes

Get moving

- [ ] Brisk walk, or another moderate activity such as cycling, swimming or dancing
  25 minutes, at a pace where you can talk but not sing

Done when: You've done three sessions of 25 minutes this week

Sticking point: Getting the pace right. If you can't talk, slow down. If you could sing, walk a little faster.

Dec 14–20
Week 3

Add strength once

Get moving

- [ ] Brisk walk, or another moderate activity such as cycling, swimming or dancing
  25 minutes, at a pace where you can talk but not sing
- [ ] Strength exercises after your session: sit-to-stand, mini-squats, calf raises and wall press-ups
  1 round of 5 of each

Done when: You've done three 25-minute sessions and one round of strength exercises

Sticking point: The first strength session can feel awkward. Go slowly, hold the chair for balance, and stop any exercise that hurts.

Dec 21–27
Week 4

Strength twice, and a month

Build the habit

- [ ] [ ] [ ] Brisk walk, or another moderate activity such as cycling, swimming or dancing
  25 minutes, at a pace where you can talk but not sing
- [ ] [ ] Strength exercises after your session: sit-to-stand, mini-squats, calf raises and wall press-ups
  1 round of 5 of each

Done when: You've done three 25-minute sessions and two strength sessions, and kept going for a month

Sticking point: The novelty wears off around now. Keep the same days and times so you don't have to decide each week.

Dec 28–Jan 3
Week 5

Thirty minutes

Build the habit

- [ ] [ ] [ ] Brisk walk, or another moderate activity such as cycling, swimming or dancing
  30 minutes, at a pace where you can talk but not sing
- [ ] [ ] Strength exercises after your session: sit-to-stand, mini-squats, calf raises and wall press-ups
  1 round of 8 of each

Done when: You've done three 30-minute sessions and two strength sessions this week

Jan 4–10
Week 6

Add a short walk

Build the habit

- [ ] [ ] [ ] Brisk walk, or another moderate activity such as cycling, swimming or dancing
  30 minutes, at a pace where you can talk but not sing
- [ ] Short brisk walk
  15 minutes
- [ ] [ ] Strength exercises after your session: sit-to-stand, mini-squats, calf raises and wall press-ups
  2 rounds of 8 of each, with a short rest between rounds

Done when: You've done three 30-minute sessions, one 15-minute walk and two strength sessions

Sticking point: A short walk is easy to skip. Tie it to something you already do, such as walking to the shops or after lunch.

Jan 11–17
Week 7

Thirty-five minutes

Build up

- [ ] Brisk walk, or another moderate activity such as cycling, swimming or dancing
  35 minutes, at a pace where you can talk but not sing
- [ ] Short brisk walk
  15 minutes
- [ ] Strength exercises after your session: sit-to-stand, mini-squats, calf raises and wall press-ups
  2 rounds of 8 of each

Done when: You've done three 35-minute sessions, one 15-minute walk and two strength sessions

Jan 18–24
Week 8

Try something new

Build up

- [ ] Brisk walk, or another moderate activity such as cycling, swimming or dancing
  35 minutes, at a pace where you can talk but not sing
- [ ] Swap one session for a different moderate activity: a swim, a bike ride, a dance class or a hike
  35 minutes
- [ ] Short brisk walk
  15 minutes
- [ ] Strength exercises after your session: sit-to-stand, mini-squats, calf raises and wall press-ups
  2 rounds of 8 of each

Done when: You've done three 35-minute sessions, one of them something new, one 15-minute walk and two strength sessions

Sticking point: If the same walk is starting to feel like a chore, this is the week to change it. A new activity, a new route or a friend to walk with keeps it fresh.

Jan 25–31
Week 9

A second short walk

Build up

- [ ] Brisk walk, or another moderate activity such as cycling, swimming or dancing
  35 minutes, at a pace where you can talk but not sing
- [ ] Short brisk walk
  15 minutes
- [ ] Strength exercises after your session: sit-to-stand, mini-squats, calf raises and wall press-ups
  2 rounds of 10 of each

Done when: You've done three 35-minute sessions, two 15-minute walks and two strength sessions

Feb 1–7
Week 10

150 minutes

Reach the guideline

- [ ] Brisk walk, or another moderate activity such as cycling, swimming or dancing
  45 minutes: an easy 5-minute start, then 40 at a pace where you can talk but not sing
- [ ] Short brisk walk
  15 minutes
- [ ] Strength exercises after your session: sit-to-stand, mini-squats, calf raises and wall press-ups
  2 rounds of 10 of each

Done when: You've done 150 minutes of moderate activity, plus warm-ups, and two strength sessions this week

Sticking point: Fitting in 45-minute sessions. On a busy day, split one into two walks of about 20 brisk minutes. The minutes still count.

Feb 8–14
Week 11

Your own mix

Reach the guideline

- [ ] Moderate activity in any mix you like, such as five 30-minute sessions or three of 40 and two of 15, each with an easy start
  150 minutes of moderate activity, plus warm-ups
- [ ] Strength exercises after your session: sit-to-stand, mini-squats, calf raises and wall press-ups
  2 rounds of 10 of each

Done when: You've done 150 minutes of moderate activity and two strength sessions, in a mix that suits you

Feb 15–21
Week 12

Plan the next six months

Make it yours

- [ ] Moderate activity in your own mix
  150 minutes of moderate activity, plus warm-ups
- [ ] Strength exercises after your session: sit-to-stand, mini-squats, calf raises and wall press-ups
  2 rounds of 10 of each
- [ ] Write down your usual week, and a fallback for busy weeks: three 20-minute sessions

Done when: You've done 150 minutes and two strength sessions, and written down your usual week and your fallback

Milestones

Sun, Dec 6 — Move for 20 minutes three times in one week

Tue, Dec 29	Three times a week for a month
Sat, Feb 27	Three times a week for three months
Thu, Aug 26	Three times a week for nine months

How the plan works

You exercise three times a week, on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. You can move the days to suit you. Each week adds a few minutes, until you reach the amount the NHS, the World Health Organization and the US Physical Activity Guidelines recommend for adults: at least 150 minutes of moderate activity a week, plus strengthening exercises that work all the major muscle groups on at least 2 days. If you don't exercise at the moment, you get there in week 10. If you're already active now and then, in week 6.

Moderate means you can talk, but not sing. Your heart beats faster, you breathe faster and you feel warmer. A brisk walk is the simplest way to do it. Cycling, swimming, dancing and hiking count too.

Short bouts count. A 15-minute walk adds to your weekly total, and on a busy day two 10-minute walks can stand in for one 20-minute session.

Strength exercises come after your session on Tuesday and Saturday, while your muscles are warm. You can do them on other days instead if that suits you better. They don't count towards your 150 minutes: you do them as well.

Your board steps follow the habit: three sessions in one week, then three a week for a month, three months and nine months. If a week feels too hard, repeat it before moving on.

Which level to pick

▪ I don't exercise at the moment: you rarely do anything that leaves you a little out of breath, or a 20-minute brisk walk would be hard work. You start with three 20-minute sessions.

▪ I'm active now and then: you can already walk briskly for 30 minutes, and you exercise some weeks but not most. You start with three 30-minute sessions.

If you're not sure, pick the first level. It's easier to move on early than to recover from starting too hard.

For week 1, you can split each 20-minute session into two 10-minute walks on the same day. If ten minutes feels too much, start with a few minutes of easy movement or try the NHS sitting exercises (https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/) to build confidence. Start week 1 when you can manage its sessions in one go or in two shorter bouts.

Before you start

Speak to a GP or doctor first if you haven't exercised for some time, or you have a medical condition or concerns about your health.

See a doctor before you start if any of these apply to you:

▪ a doctor has told you that you have a heart condition, or you've had a stroke

▪ you get unexplained pains in your chest, at rest or when you're active

▪ you feel faint or dizzy when you're active, enough to lose your balance

▪ you've had an asthma attack that needed urgent medical help in the last 12 months

▪ you have diabetes and have had trouble controlling your blood glucose in the last three months

▪ you have a muscle, bone or joint problem that you've been told activity could make worse

▪ you have any other condition that could make exercise unsafe for you

Get advice too if you have an injury, you've had a recent health event such as a heart attack or an operation, or you're pregnant or have recently given birth.

Start each session at an easy pace for the first 5 minutes or so, then speed up to brisk. That warm-up is part of your session, but count only the brisk minutes towards your 150.

Stop straight away if you feel pain or become unwell. If a symptom worries you or doesn't go away, get medical advice.

The strength exercises

These come from the NHS home strength routine. You need a sturdy chair and a wall. Do each one slowly.

1. Sit-to-stand. Sit on the edge of the chair, feet hip-width apart, and lean slightly forward. Stand up using your legs, not your arms, then sit down slowly.

2. Mini-squats. Hold the back of the chair, feet hip-width apart. Bend your knees as far as is comfortable, back straight, then stand up again.

3. Calf raises. Hold the back of the chair and lift both heels off the floor, slowly, then lower them.

4. Wall press-ups. Stand at arm's length from a wall, hands flat on it at chest height. Bend your arms to bring your chest towards the wall, then push back.

A round is the number of reps in the plan for each exercise, one after the other. Work until you need a short rest before the next round. Add reps slowly, as the plan does.

This routine is a starting point: it works your legs, chest and arms, but not much of your back, shoulders or tummy. The guideline asks for all the major muscle groups, so add activities that strengthen the rest: carrying heavy shopping, heavy gardening, yoga and pilates all count. When the routine feels easy, move on to the Get strong plan, which works all the major muscle groups.

What you need

- Comfortable shoes that support your feet and don't rub. Trainers you already own are fine to start.
- Clothes you can move in, layers in cold weather, and something reflective if you go out in the dark.
- A solid chair without wheels that won't slip, for the strength exercises.
- Water, and a hat and sunscreen in sunny weather.
- A checklist on paper or your phone, to tick off each session. Seeing the ticks add up keeps you going.

Common mistakes

- Doing too much too soon. Pushing hard in week 1 risks aches or an injury, and that can knock your motivation. Build up slowly.
- Going too gently to count. If you could sing while you walk, speed up a little.
- Catching up on missed sessions. Don't double up. See "If you fall behind" below.
- Waiting for a good time. Fixed days and times work better than fitting it in when you can.
- Leaving out the strength exercises. They're half of the guideline, and the routine takes only a few minutes.
- Sticking with something you don't enjoy. Any moderate activity counts. Swap until you find one you look forward to.

Keeping it up to nine months

After the last week there are no more weekly steps. Keep going with:

- 150 minutes of moderate activity a week, in the mix that suits you, spread over the week.
- Strength exercises on 2 days, working all the major muscle groups.
- A fallback for busy weeks: three 20-minute sessions. Any amount is better than none, and it keeps the habit alive.

Three months and nine months are the next steps on your board. Each one counts weeks with three sessions, so a fallback week still counts.

Want more? Up to 300 minutes a week brings even more benefit. You could start running with the Run a 5K plan, build the walking habit with Walk every day, or train harder with Get strong.

If you fall behind

Missed 1 week: Repeat the week you missed, then carry on. Don't add the missed sessions on top, and don't squeeze two into one day.

Missed 2 weeks: Go back one week from where you stopped and do it again before moving on.

Missed 3 weeks: Go back two weeks from where you stopped and build up again from there. Your count of weeks starts again, but the fitness you've built doesn't vanish.

Missed 4 or more weeks: Start again at the week that matches what you can do today, often week 1 of your level. If you stopped because you were ill or injured, check with your GP or doctor before you start again.

Sources

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults-aged-19-to-64/`
“Speak to your GP first if you have not exercised for some time, or if you have medical conditions or concerns.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults-aged-19-to-64/`
“One way to tell if you're working at a moderate intensity level is if you can still talk, but not sing.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults-aged-19-to-64/`
“do strengthening activities that work all the major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms) on at least 2 days a week”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-exercises/`
“Build up slowly and aim to gradually increase the repetitions of each exercise over time.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-exercises/`
“For the chair-based exercises, choose a solid, stable chair that does not have wheels and that will not slip on the surface it is on.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/running-and-aerobic-exercises/how-to-warm-up-before-exercising/`
“Stop the exercise immediately if you feel any pain or become unwell. If you are concerned about any symptoms, or they do not go away, get help from 111 online or call 111 for advice.”

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (US Physical Activity Guidelines)
`https://odphp.health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/physical-activity-guidelines/current-guidelines/top-10-things-know`
“To attain the most health benefits from physical activity, adults need at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, like brisk walking or fast dancing, each week.”

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (US Physical Activity Guidelines)
`https://odphp.health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/physical-activity-guidelines/current-guidelines/top-10-things-know`

"The first edition of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans stated that only 10-minute bouts of physical activity counted toward meeting the guidelines. The second edition removes this requirement to encourage Americans to move more frequently throughout the day as they work toward meeting the guidelines."

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Move Your Way)
`https://odphp.health.gov/moveyourway/activity-planner/why-these-goals`
"Build up to 150 minutes over time. Even 5 minutes of physical activity has health benefits — and it all adds up."

Better Health Channel, Victoria State Government
`https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/physical-activity-how-to-get-started`
"If you answer 'yes' to some of the questions from the adult pre-exercising screening tool, see a doctor before starting physical activity."

Better Health Channel, Victoria State Government
`https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/physical-activity-how-to-get-started`
"Exercise progression is unique to every person, so if you have not exercised for some time, progress slowly. Increase the length and the intensity of your exercise session gradually."

Better Health Channel, Victoria State Government
`https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/physical-activity-how-to-get-started`
"Usually a 5 to 10-minute warm-up is all you'll need, but this will vary from person to person and if the weather is cold."

World Health Organization
`https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity`
"The guidelines highlight that any amount of physical activity is better than none; all physical activity counts; all age groups should limit the amount of time being sedentary; and muscle strengthening benefits everyone."

World Health Organization
`https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity`
"That is, they do not meet the global recommendations of at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week."

This plan online	`https://goaltodo.com/exercise-more`
Reach it with others on Welang	`https://welang.com/goals/exercise-more`
Reach it on your own in HourLife	`https://www.hourlife.com`

This plan is a guide, not medical advice. See a doctor before starting if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or haven't exercised in a long time.