

## Managing Your Weight: Tracking Your Activity

Being physically active offers many health benefits: better heart health, lower blood pressure, improved cholesterol levels and weight control. Most people who maintain a healthy weight or lose weight and keep it off are active every day. Tracking your activity can help you know how much you are moving.

The goal is to get about 1 hour of physical activity each day. You can start with 30 minutes each day. It does not have to be all at once — a few minutes several times a day will help, too. In general, it is best to do less sitting and more standing.

### Daily activities

As part of your daily routine, try some of these activities:

- Walk, wheel, or ride your bike more and drive less.
- Walk up the stairs instead of taking an elevator.
- Get off the bus a few stops early and walk the rest of the way.
- Mow the lawn with a push mower, rake leaves or garden.
- Push a stroller.
- Clean the house.
- Do exercise or pedal a stationary bike while watching television.
- Play actively with children.
- Take a brisk 10-minute walk in the morning, at lunch and after dinner.
- Stand while talking on the phone.
- Plan a walking meeting.

### Exercise routine

As part of your workout, try some of these activities:

- Walk or jog.
- Use exercise equipment such as the elliptical, treadmill or weight machines.
- Cycle or use an arm bicycle.
- Swim or do water aerobics.
- Play racket sports.
- Golf (pull a golf cart or carry your clubs).
- Canoe or kayak.
- Cross-country ski.

- Play team sports such as basketball or volleyball.
- Dance.
- Take part in an exercise program at work, home, school or the gym.

## **Fitness programs**

You may find success in sticking with an exercise plan by attending classes or watching an exercise program in your home. View classes that are offered by Northwestern Medicine at [nm.org/patients-and-visitors/classes-and-events](http://nm.org/patients-and-visitors/classes-and-events).

## **Tracking your activity**

Pedometers and accelerometers (more advanced pedometers) are devices that may be programmed to track:

- Steps taken
- Calories burned
- Distance traveled
- Hours slept
- Active minutes
- Quality of sleep
- Intensity of exercise

You can purchase a device that is worn on your wrist or waistband. Also, several smartphones have tracking apps you can use. There are many types and brands of pedometers and tracking apps available.

Set a goal of taking 10,000 steps a day for better health and to maintain a healthy weight. This is about the same as walking 3.5 to 5 miles, depending on the length of your steps.

<b>Pedometer Activity Level (steps per day)</b>	
Sedentary	Less than 5,000
Low activity	5,000 to 7,499
Somewhat active	7,500 to 9,999
Active	10,000 to 12,499
Highly active	More than 12,500

## ***Step-tracking guidelines***

- Keep track of your daily steps for 1 week and then take the average for that week. Increase your activity by 500 steps for the next week and then weekly until you reach your goal.
- Invest in a good quality pair of padded or cushioned shoes.
- Use the highest number of steps that you walked in a 1- to 2-week period as your everyday step target for another 2 weeks.

- Slowly increase your step count by 100 to 200 steps until you reach your step goal every day.
- Stop exercising and consult your physician if you feel pain or have any physical problems while exercising.
- If you are unable to walk 30 minutes each day all at one time, then take 5, 10 or 15 minute little walks throughout your day.
- Slowly increase your steps to prevent injury. Consult your physician first before doing any strenuous physical exercise.