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8 ways to motivate yourself to exercise

You know that exercise is important, but there are times you may not feel up to it. Here are eight ways to stay motivated to stick with your exercise program. You'll be glad you did!

1 Choose activities you enjoy.

Hate running? Then don't do it! Maybe you prefer walking around your neighborhood or taking an exercise class at the gym after work. If you enjoy the activity, you're more likely to stick with it.

2 Get others to join you.

Whether it's a friend, family member, or coworker, you can encourage each other to get out there and exercise, even on days when you don't feel like it.

Are you ready to get fit?

Shape Up NYC is a free program that helps make fitness fun. Sign up for classes like Hip House Cardio, Total Body Bootcamp, and Yoga. [Learn more here.](#)

3 Do only a few minutes of activity at a time. Try to get at least 150 minutes (two hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, every week. But you can break down the 150 minutes into as many smaller sessions as needed. Whether it's 30 minutes or five minutes, every little bit makes a difference.

4 Plug it into your calendar.

Schedule exercise sessions just like you would any other important event in your week.

5 Focus on how you'll feel after you exercise. Think about how much better you'll feel, how you'll sleep better and have less anxiety, and how glad you'll be that you did it.

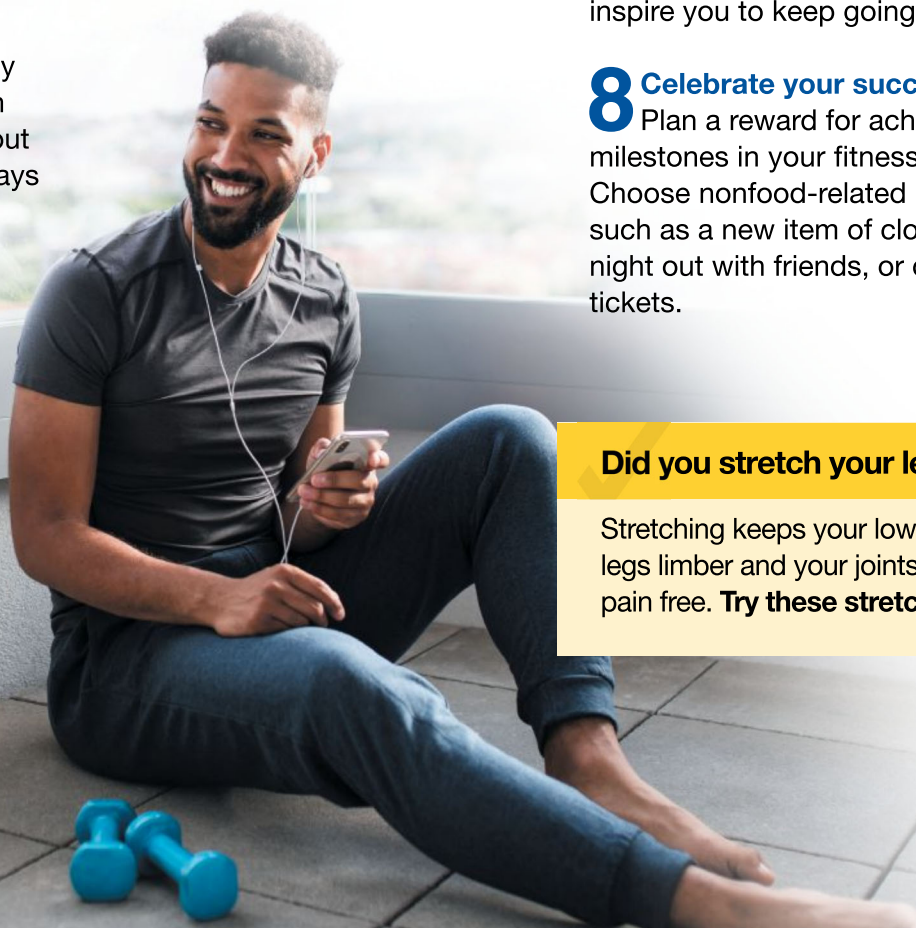
6 Set goals. Do you want to lose weight? Run your first 5K? Get clear about your goal and create a plan for achieving it. Thinking about your goal can encourage you to exercise even when the couch is calling your name.

7 Track your progress. Once you identify your goals, keep track of your achievements along the way. Seeing your progress can inspire you to keep going.

8 Celebrate your success. Plan a reward for achieving milestones in your fitness journey. Choose nonfood-related prizes, such as a new item of clothing, a night out with friends, or concert tickets.

Did you stretch your legs?

Stretching keeps your lower legs limber and your joints pain free. **Try these stretches.**



Does e-biking count as exercise?



Take a regular bike and add a little power. What do you get? An electric bike, or e-bike — and, according to several studies, a solid workout.

Counting the benefits

On an e-bike, a built-in motor adds extra oomph to your pedaling. This makes it easier to climb hills and ride longer distances in less time.

The electric assistance means your heart rate won't rise as much as it would on a regular bike. However, studies have found you'll still work hard enough to count toward your 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity each week.

In fact, one research review crunched the numbers from 12 studies and found e-biking boosted heart rate, energy usage, and power output more than walking.

What's more, people with e-bikes tend to spend more time riding than those with regular bikes, allowing the rewards to add up. Another plus, for the earth: Replacing gasoline-powered car rides with e-bike trips reduces emissions, which helps the environment.

Making exercise easier

E-bikes hold special appeal for people who don't already have a cycling habit. For one thing, they're less demanding on muscles and joints. Many older adults or people with preexisting pain or illnesses can still ride.

On an e-bike, you won't get as sweaty. Tough conditions — like hills and wind — become far more manageable. In addition, e-bikes are just plain fun, according to participants who tried them out for a study.

Safe, smart riding

One downside of e-bikes is the price — they often cost more than regular bicycles. The good news is that there are many places in NYC where you can rent one. For information about rentals and popular bike paths, [click here](#).

Just as with regular bikes, follow traffic laws and trail etiquette. And wear a helmet — accidents can happen on any type of bike. Here are some **bike safety tips**.



How to have a healthier BBQ this summer

Nothing beats the ease, flavor, and experience of cooking over a blazing hot fire. But having a barbecue can backfire if you're trying to eat a healthier diet. There are the fatty meats, heavy sauces, and let's not forget the tempting sides. However, with a few smart tweaks, your grill can become the gateway to a healthier you. Here's how.

Pick the right protein. Move over, steaks and burgers. Instead, select leaner options, such as fish, skinless chicken, and lean ground turkey. Keep in mind that a healthy portion of meat is only 3 to 6 ounces, or about the size of a deck of cards.

Think beyond meat. Pack your grill grates with produce. Experiment with bell peppers, corn, zucchini, and other vegetables for a variety of nutrients and colors at each meal. Grilled fruits, such as bananas,

peaches, and pineapple, make for a delicious and healthy dessert.

Make time to marinate. Cooking meat at high temperatures causes chemicals to form that could increase your risk for cancer. But this doesn't mean you have to shut down your grill for the season. Marinating meat before grilling for at least 30 minutes in a mixture that includes lemon juice or vinegar — along with oil, herbs, and spices — can reduce these chemicals. The marinades are also a healthier option than heavy

saucers, which are often packed with salt and sugar.

DIY sides. Store-bought BBQ sides, such as coleslaw and potato salad, are loaded with saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar. You can opt for healthier versions when you make them yourself.

Bring your cookout indoors. If the weather isn't cooperating, use an air fryer. The high-tech kitchen appliance allows you to fry food without large amounts of fat. Air fryers circulate hot air to cook food on the inside while the outside gets crispy.

Safety first. Throw out any marinades after the meat goes onto the grill. Always use a meat thermometer to make sure food reaches a safe temperature and then place cooked meat onto a clean plate. For more information, visit [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov).

Try a grilled honey herb chicken recipe!

We're buzzing about this **honey herb chicken recipe!** Fire up the grill and prepare for the perfect balance of savory and sweet flavors.

Grilled peaches and brie

Take advantage of the season's juicy peaches with this tasty recipe!

Ingredients

- 8 oz. brie
- 4 ripe peaches, halved with pits removed
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 4 tbsp. honey
- Fresh rosemary for garnish

Directions

1. Preheat grill to medium-high heat.
2. After removing the rind, slice brie into eight equal-sized pieces.
3. Lightly brush cut side of peaches with oil.
4. Grill peaches cut-side down until grill marks form — three or four minutes. Flip them and cook another minute.
5. Remove peaches from the grill. Place one slice of brie in the center of each peach (where the pit was) and drizzle with honey. Garnish with rosemary.

Per serving

Serves eight. Each serving provides: 191 calories, 11 g total fat (5 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat), 28 mg cholesterol, 179 mg sodium, 17 g total carbohydrate, 1 g dietary fiber, 16 g total sugars, 7 g protein.



Summer salad with homemade honey vinaigrette

Kick your summer up a notch by adding veggies and making a delicious homemade vinaigrette.

Ingredients

- 2 cups baby spinach
- 1 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 ½ tbsp. avocado oil
- 1 tbsp. water
- 2 tsp. honey
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ½ cup chopped cucumber
- ½ cup chopped strawberries
- ½ orange bell pepper, chopped
- ½ cup blueberries
- ¼ cup chopped walnuts
- 2 oz. crumbled feta cheese
- 8 oz. grilled chicken breast, chopped

Instructions

1. Divide the baby spinach between two serving bowls and set them aside.
2. Combine the red wine vinegar, avocado oil, water, honey, garlic powder, salt, and pepper in a bowl and whisk until combined.
3. Divide the dressing in half and pour it over the baby spinach in the bowls.
4. Divide the toppings (cucumber, strawberries, bell pepper, blueberries, walnuts, feta cheese, grilled chicken) between the two bowls.
5. Toss it all together and enjoy!

Per Serving

Serves two; serving size is one salad. Each serving provides: 522 calories, 29 g total fat (6 g saturated fat, less than 1 g trans fat), 111 mg cholesterol, 760 mg sodium, 22 g total carbohydrate, 4 g dietary fiber, 15 g sugars, 45 g protein.



Is melatonin a safe sleep aid for kids?

You may not be the only one in your house tossing and turning at night. Sleep troubles affect as many as one in four kids and teens. What can a parent do? Some have turned to a supplement called melatonin. You can easily get melatonin online and at retail stores without a prescription. But that does not mean it's safe for all children.

What is melatonin?

Melatonin is a hormone the body makes naturally. It is released at night and sends signals from the brain that it's time to sleep.

Sometimes it's OK to use melatonin for a short period of time (think days, not weeks or months). For example, to get your child back on schedule after vacation or during time changes. But health experts still need more research on long-term safety.

You should always talk with your child's pediatrician first before giving them melatonin. Even short-term use can cause side effects. These include:

- Agitation
- Being sleepy in the morning
- Bed-wetting
- Headaches
- Nausea and dizziness
- Depression

Sleep safe and sound

Without enough sleep, kids and teens can be cranky, have trouble concentrating in school, and even develop health problems.

If your child is struggling, try these ideas before using melatonin:

- **Create a bedtime routine.**
Go through it around the same time every night.

- **Put away electronic devices an hour before bed.**

The blue light from screens decreases the body's amount of natural melatonin.

- **Be active.** Getting enough exercise each day can improve kids' sleep. Just don't schedule it too close to bedtime.

Your pediatrician can help

Is your child still having trouble sleeping? Talk with their pediatrician. They can tell you if melatonin is a good choice and how to use it safely.

Make sure the pediatrician knows everything your child takes, including other supplements. Melatonin can interact with certain medicines.

Be sure to also ask about correct dosing. Most children and teens need only a small dose of melatonin — 0.5 milligrams or less.

If your child takes too much melatonin, call Poison Control at **800.222.1222**. Call 911 if their breathing is not normal or if you can't wake them up.

How much sleep does your child need?

Sleep helps children think more clearly and stay healthy. **Check out this chart** to see how much sleep your child needs at different ages.



Social media and teens: 4 red flags for parents



If you are a parent of a teen, you know all too well that kids are growing up in a tech-infused world. Chances are social media plays a pretty big role in their life.

To be sure, there are benefits. But for many, social media can affect physical and emotional health — from poor sleep and low self-esteem to an increased risk for obesity, depression, and even suicide.

How do you know whether these platforms are having a negative impact on your teenager? Look for these signs:

1. Time spent

It's no surprise users are more likely to feel anxious and depressed the longer they're on social media. If using these platforms begins to interfere with your teenager's sleep, homework, exercise, or face-to-face interactions, set screen-time guidelines. For example, your teen should turn off all screens during family meals and at bedtime.

2. Isolation

Withdrawing from people, avoiding social situations, or skirting conversations about their social media use — these can all signal your teen is being cyberbullied. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Visit stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/prevention for steps to help your child.

3. Negative content

Image editing — including face filters — and carefully crafted feeds can set unrealistic expectations. If you suspect your teen is already struggling with their self-esteem or body image, encourage them to avoid appearance-centric apps. Also, check in regularly about how social media makes them feel.

4. Privacy concerns

Giving out personal information or sending or receiving inappropriate content is a clear sign your teen

doesn't comprehend the dangers online. Explain why their identity and location are important to protect. To monitor their activity, consider following or "friending" your child's accounts. Stay respectful of their boundaries, though, and ask if it's OK to interact with their posts.

Is your teen stressed?

Teens don't react to stress the same way adults do, but you can find ways to help them cope. Reach out to your provider or a mental health specialist for advice. Learn more about **mental health** and take a **depression quiz**.

TIPS FOR TAMING

STRESS

Stress is how your body reacts to challenges in life. Some stress is normal, but too much for too long can lead to health problems. Here's how to keep stress in check.

BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION

Adopting healthy habits can help you minimize stress:



GET QUALITY SLEEP.

Start by going to bed and waking at the same time each day.

FUEL UP.

Eat balanced, healthy meals with plenty of produce and proteins.

STAY CONNECTED.

Spend time with loved ones.



PRACTICE GRATITUDE.

Consider what you're thankful for every day.



DON'T OVERDO IT.

Stick to a realistic schedule.



DO WHAT YOU LOVE.

Make time for activities you enjoy.

DE-STRESS AND RESET

To restore calm when you're feeling stressed:



WALK IT OFF.

Physical activity can reduce stress. Taking a walk is a quick and easy mood booster.



BREATHE.

Take a few deep breaths. Count to four as you inhale, hold for one second, then count to five as you exhale.



PUT IT IN WRITING.

Jotting down your worries on paper can help ease your mind.



PICTURE SOMETHING BETTER.

Visualize yourself at a happy place. Dwell on the details, like the feeling of sand under your feet at the beach.



WASH YOUR WORRIES AWAY.

A steamy shower can relax your muscles and make you feel calmer.

WHAT CAUSES YOUR STRESS? Take our [stress trigger assessment](#) to find out.