

Exercise Plan Checklist

By Lauren Meir

- Start Slow and Take Baby Steps
 - If you're not used to working out, start by getting active in small ways:
;Take the stairs instead of the elevator Go for a brisk walk after dinner. ;Move whenever you can.
 - Keep moving in your daily activities - taking the stairs whenever possible, walking your errands instead of driving - and you'll start to notice results.
- Make a Routine
 - Make time for a morning workout, or squeeze in exercise after work. Start a schedule
 - Pressed for time? Break up your workouts into segments - 20 minutes in the morning, and 20 before dinner.
 - Find what works for you and stick with it Habits are hard to break, and once you form a workable plan you'll find it easy to stick to.
- Increase your Workouts
 - Start with 3 times a week, for 30-60 minutes of moderate activity.
 - Gradually increase the length and frequency of your workouts, but don't try to do too much too fast.
 - Boost your workouts by length and intensity by only 10% after every two weeks Your body needs to get used to your new active lifestyle.
- Learn to Lift
 - Everyone can benefit from strength training Lifting weights is a great way tone up and slim down, fast.
 - Strength training fires up your metabolism and keeps it elevated for hours.
 - Muscle requires more calorie expenditure to ;work ;properly, so ultimately the more muscle you have, the more fat you'll burn Another bonus: Weight-bearing activities improve bone-density and overall fitness endurance.
 - Maintain proper form Be sure you have a trainer or knowledgeable gym buddy show you the basics first, so you don't injure yourself.
- Combine for Strength and Endurance
 - Maximize your workout by incorporating both cardio and ;strength ;train- ing into your workout regimen.

- Experiment with cardio and strength routines** Do your favorite form of cardio for 40 minutes, and add 20 minutes of strength training. Or get a great full-body workout in less time by combining HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training, which is a circuit composed of explosive cardio movements) and a strength training routine.
- Switch it up**
 - Don't do the same thing every workout** ..you and your body will both get bored, and you'll stop seeing results.
 - Switch up the length, intensity, and type of workout you do for variety** Is jogging your thing? Try alternating speed and incline on your runs. Change it up again by sampling a step-aerobic ;or Zumba class.
- Write it down.**
 - Chart your exercise schedule in a journal.
 - Organize your workouts so you'll know what to do each day, as well as which exercises you should save for later in the week.
 - Track your progress, to help you stay motivated and reach your fitness goals.
- Nourish**
 - Eat a small meal of complex carbohydrates, lean protein, and healthy fat before and after workouts.
 - Have a small snack about an hour before you exercise Try a ;banana ;with greek yogurt pre-workout.
 - Eat a balanced meal post-workout All meals should combine protein, whole grains and healthy fats, but you may need to adjust by workout type. Eat more lean protein after ;strenuous ;strength training, and consume more complex carbs after an intense bout of cardio.
 - Drink plenty of water before, during, and after workouts.
- Rest**
 - Overtraining can cause injury** Your body needs time to recover, especially from ;strenuous ;workouts.
 - Wait at least 42 hours between training the same muscle-groups.
 - Don't overdo high-impact cardio (like running), though you can perform moderate or lower-intensity activities on your off days.
 - ;Try alternating intense workout days with lower-impact activities, such as ;Pilates ;or yoga Craving cardio? Head for the pool. Swimming is a great cardio activity that also tones your muscles without adding pressure to joints.
- Stay Motivated**
 - Get a gym buddy or personal trainer - being obligated to another person will keep you from breaking exercise plans.
 - Feeling lethargic? Take a look at your exercise ;regimen Perhaps your routine has gotten stale and you need to overhaul your schedule.

- Avoid overtraining** Working out too hard too often can burn you out fast and ruin your health.
- Ensure you're getting enough nourishment and calories to fuel your body through your workouts.**
- Look at your workout journal to help you locate and resolve the problem** Retool your workout, stay positive, and reach your goals.