



Why is exercise important to me?

No matter how old you are, exercise can make you stronger, more flexible—and keep your heart healthy. If you stay fit, you will be more able to do things, like go food shopping or visit friends.

Exercise gives you energy. Think of your body as a rechargeable battery. Exercise recharges you! It helps control blood pressure, too. If you are diabetic, exercise can lower blood sugar. It aids circulation and helps you sleep. Exercise can also help keep your bones healthy.

Mood lifting chemicals are released in your brain when you exercise. So exercise can fight depression and help you feel more positive about your life.



How should I start to exercise?

First, tell your doctor that you want to exercise. He or she can make sure you do not have any special problems that would be made worse by a workout.

After checking with your doctor, write down a goal you would like to reach. Goals might be walking around the block without stopping, bike riding with your family, shopping at the mall with a friend, or going dancing.

Make an exercise plan that will work for you. What kind of person are you? Do you prefer to do things alone, or would a group help keep you motivated? Write down how often you will exercise, what time of day, and for how long. Start with small blocks of time, like 10 minutes every other day. Increase it by a minute or two each week.

How will I know exercise is helping?

It takes time—a few weeks or a few months—to feel better with exercise. Start a log or notebook. Keep track of when you exercised, what you did, and how it felt. You will be able to see your small but steady progress. This can keep you from getting discouraged and quitting.

Once you reach your goal, set a new one. Exercise should become a long-term habit. It can also be fun!

Can people in wheelchairs exercise?

Yes. There are many stretching and strengthening exercises that can be done in a chair. Moving the arms (and legs, if possible) can help strengthen the heart. Using hand weights can build muscles.

How can I exercise?

Problem	How can I prevent it?	What should I ask?
I'm too <i>tired</i> to exercise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise helps <i>fight</i> fatigue! Try to work out early on your off days from dialysis. • Talk to your doctor if fatigue keeps you from doing things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is my red blood cell count at the target level? • How can my fatigue be treated so I can be more active?
I've tried to exercise, but I always quit. It's boring and I don't see any progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it fun! Pick music you love and save it for exercise. • Find an exercise buddy. • Find an exercise group in your area. Meet new people. • Reward yourself when you finish each session. • Build variety into your plan. Change what you do, and where, each week. Pick different music and rewards. • Keep a log each time you work out so you see progress. • Try something new, like yoga or tai chi, if available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does a community center in our area have any beginning exercise classes? • Does someone else at this unit want to be my exercise buddy? • Where could I find some new types of exercises to try?
I don't know which exercises are good for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the library and find a book. • Talk to your doctor. Ask for a referral to a physical therapist for an exercise plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What exercises are best to improve my strength, flexibility, endurance, and heart health?

Where can I find more information about exercise?

- *Exercise: A Guide for People on Dialysis* – Booklet, Life Options Rehabilitation Program. To request a free copy, call (800)468-7777.
- *Feeling Better with Exercise: A Video Guide for People on Dialysis* – Life Options Rehabilitation Program. To request a free copy, call (800)468-7777.
- *Staying Fit with Kidney Disease* – Brochure, National Kidney Foundation. To request a free copy, call (800)622-9010.

