



Exercising with anemia

Every move counts

Move more and reduce your sedentary time each day by incorporating different types of movement. It is never too late to start, some is always better than none!

How to get started

Long-term anemia may leave you overtired and short of breath. The main goal of your exercise plan should be to improve your health through regular exercise. Committing to regular exercise will improve your ability to do the activities of daily living by improving your heart and lung health and overall fitness level. Regular exercise also significantly reduces your risks of heart disease, some cancers, type 2 diabetes, stroke, obesity, hypertension, osteoporosis, anxiety and depression.

Plan your exercise activity to get maximum benefit from each type of exercise. If you start to feel tired, reduce how many exercises you do. Start with 5–10 minutes of exercise, with adequate rest in between, and increase the duration when you feel comfortable.

Do not exercise if your resting blood pressure is greater than 180/110 mmHg.

Take all medicines as recommended by your doctor or pharmacist.

Warm up and cool down

Always start your exercise session with a 10–15-minute warm up to loosen up the muscles and raise the heart rate safely. Warm-up exercises include dynamic stretches, range-of-motion activities and low intensity movements. This can be done standing up, walking around, marching on the spot or seated.

Always end your exercise session with a 10–15-minute cool-down to ensure your heart rate and breathing rate return to normal safely. Cool down exercises include slowly decreasing the intensity of your activity and simple stretches.

Be active

Some is good, more is better

How much:	Aim for at least 150 – 300 minutes a week of moderate intensity or at least 75–150 minutes a week of vigorous intensity physical activity. Start moving more each day increasing to regular movement every day and add sessions as your strength and stamina improve..
How hard:	Any movement helps. Aim for moderate to vigorous intensity—aim to get slightly breathless. Take frequent breaks, if necessary.
How long:	Aim to spread out your sessions throughout the week. If your fitness level is low, start with 5–10-minute sessions and add 10-minute intervals until you can comfortably exercise for longer. Take frequent breaks, if necessary, and ensure your exercise plan is enjoyable and not over-strenuous.

What type:	All physical activity counts. Try activities within your abilities: walking, cycling, jogging, dancing, swimming, water aerobics, hiking—choose something you enjoy! Recreational team sports such as soccer, tennis, or volleyball are great social activities too! Household activities such as cleaning, gardening, vacuuming or walking your dog are great activities for your health.
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What will it do for me?

Regular exercise helps your body to adapt your heart and lungs to work more effectively. The lack of iron in the blood results in less oxygen to working muscles, making even light work seem harder. Increasing your heart rate regularly and safely will help you get less tired and able to do more!

Build strength

How much:	At least twice a week.
How hard:	Start with light muscle strengthening exercises and progress to moderate or greater intensities over time.
How long:	Choose 8–10 exercises targeting the upper and lower body and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Try 1–3 sets of each exercise.
What type:	A variety of strength exercises using free weights, resistance machines or household items such as a can of beans or a weighted water bottle as a weight. Strength exercise can be performed standing or seated. Examples of strength exercises are side and front arm raises, arm curls, wall push-ups, side and back leg raises, chair dips, knee curls, leg straightening, toe stands and chair stands. As you progress to heavier weights or resistance, consider joining a gym or doing an outside activity where you can increase your strength and work safely in a supervised environment.

What will it do for me?

Strength exercises help you maintain and improve your ability to do everyday tasks comfortably and without feeling tired.

Improve balance

How much:	At least three days a week.
How hard:	Try 2–3 balance exercises and repeat each exercise 10–15 times.
How long:	Hold each balance for 10–30 seconds.
What type:	Try yoga, Tai Chi or simple balance exercises for the home environment. Exercise safely when doing balance exercises. Balance exercise can be done standing up, using a chair, against a wall or sitting down.

What will it do for me?

Practising balance exercises helps to train your body to react more quickly to a loss of balance and can help reduce the risk of falls, fractures and injuries.



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Sedentary living

Reduce the amount of time being sedentary. Move more and break up sedentary time. Sedentary behavior is defined as time spent sitting or lying with low energy expenditure, while awake in the context of occupational, educational, home and community settings, and travel. Higher amounts of sedentary behavior can increase the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

Replace sedentary behavior with more physical activity of any intensity (including light intensity). It is possible to avoid sedentary behaviour and be physically active while sitting or lying, through, for example, upper body led activities, inclusive and/or wheelchair-specific sport and activities. Try seated stretches for those with limited mobility; using active forms of transport; standing while working (within your abilities and environment), and other accessible active options to replace sedentary time.

Your exercise, your way!

Choose activities that are easy to start with, and that you enjoy. Always exercise within your abilities. If mobility is difficult, adapted cycling, swimming and chair-based exercises may be better alternatives. Exercise with friends and family or join a group class to improve your motivation levels and engage in social activities. Try exercising both indoors and outdoors and see which you prefer! Most importantly: **some physical activity is better than none.**

Exercise safety

If you have sickle cell disease, ensure you stay hydrated and exercise at low to moderate intensity.

Stop exercising if you experience chest pain or angina. Contact your doctor or health professional if you experience chest pain, difficulty breathing or extreme fatigue and follow your medical treatment plan as agreed with your doctor.

Do not exercise if your resting blood pressure reading is greater than 180/110 mmHg. Aim to get slightly out of breath, but exercise safely and sensibly and stop the activity if you feel unwell. If you feel at all unwell before, during or after exercise then you should discuss with your doctor how you can modify your exercise plan accordingly to ensure that you exercise safely and effectively to get the greatest health benefits.

Ask your doctor for more information about how to maintain an exercise plan. Start with shorter sessions (e.g. 10–15 minutes) and slowly build up to the recommended level.

Always wear comfortable clothing and shoes that give good support. Take frequent breaks if necessary, and drink water before, during and after exercise.

Choose environments that you can access freely and safely. Please ask your healthcare provider or local leisure organizations for advice on the best option for you.

Scan for more physical activity resources!

