



# Exercising with anxiety and depression

## 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

Regular exercise improves your overall health. They can help you gain confidence, take your mind off worries, improve your mood and self-esteem, increase your opportunity to socialize, and cope with depression and anxiety in a healthy way. Exercising safely in the outdoors has been shown to significantly improve mental health and wellbeing.

Exercise can help reduce tension, depression, anger, fatigue and confusion, which will in turn help you cope better with the activities of daily life. It can also help you manage the weight gain linked to certain medicines used to treat depression and anxiety.

Follow an exercise plan that is easy to maintain and enjoy. Invite your family or friends to join you, or ask if someone wants to be your 'exercise buddy'! There are many types of exercises, activities, sports and structured classes to help you improve your physical and mental health.

**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

<b>How much:</b>	Aim for at least <b>150-300</b> minutes a week of moderate intensity or at least <b>75-150</b> 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.
<b>How hard:</b>	Any movement helps. Aim for moderate to vigorous intensity—aim to get slightly breathless. Take frequent breaks, if necessary.
<b>How long:</b>	Aim to spread out 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.
<b>What type:</b>	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, vacuuming or walking your dog are great activities for your health.

## What will it do for me?

*Exercise significantly improves your heart and lung health and can help reduce your risks of a heart attack, obesity, hypertension, some cancers, strokes and type 2 diabetes. Regular exercise helps with weight loss and improves energy, mood, sleep quality and self-confidence—all of which will help you feel better about yourself.*

## Build strength

<b>How much:</b>	At least twice a week.
<b>How hard:</b>	Start with light muscle strengthening exercises and progress to moderate or greater intensities over time.
<b>How long:</b>	Choose 8–10 exercises targeting the upper and lower body and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Try 1–3 sets of each exercise.
<b>What type:</b>	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 exercises include side arm raises, arm curls, wall push-ups, side and back leg raises, chair dips, knee curls, chair-based leg straightening exercises, toe stands and front arm raises.

## What will it do for me?

*Strength exercises help prevent muscle weakness and assist with undertaking the activities of daily living such as household chores and social activities with friends and family.*

## Improve balance

<b>How much:</b>	At least three days a week.
<b>How hard:</b>	Choose 2–3 balance exercises and repeat each exercise 10–15 times.
<b>How long:</b>	Hold each balance for 10-30 seconds.
<b>What type:</b>	Try yoga, Tai Chi, or simple home balance exercises. Balance exercise can be done standing up using a chair, against a wall or sitting down. Ensure the area you are exercising in and the type of balance exercise is safe.

## What will it do for me?

*Practicing balance exercises helps to train your body to react more quickly to impending balance loss, thereby reducing the risk of falls, fractures and injuries.*

## 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.



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**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.**

If you have been inactive or have other health conditions, discuss with your doctor or healthcare provider how you can develop an exercise plan that you will benefit from easily.

## Exercise safety

Ask your doctor for more information on how to exercise safely and maintain an exercise plan. Some medicines can cause dehydration, coordination problems, dizziness or fatigue, so manage your exercise plan within your overall treatment and mental health support plan.

If you become overtired, stop exercising and discuss modifying your exercise plan with your doctor or healthcare provider. If you skip exercise on a scheduled day, plan it for the next day.

Start with shorter sessions (e.g. 5–10 minutes) and slowly build up to the recommended level.

Aim to get slightly out of breath, but exercise sensibly and stop the activity if you feel unwell.

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.

## Helpful resources

Free and confidential mental health and substance use support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from Wellness Together Canada. Call 1-866-585-0445 or text WELLNESS to 686868 for youth or 741741 for adults.

For Indigenous peoples, The Hope for Wellness Help Line provides immediate emotional support, crisis intervention or referrals to community-based services with experienced and culturally sensitive help line counsellors. Call 1-855-242-3310 (toll-free) or connect to the online Hope for Wellness chat. <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call Talk Suicide Canada at 1-833-456-4566. Support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Scan for more physical activity resources!

