

Being active has many rewards if you have limited mobility. **Why would you like to be more active?** Check the reasons that are important to you:

- Have fun and meet new people
- Be as independent as you can be
- Avoid excess weight gain and the stress it puts on your joints, heart, and lungs
- Have more energy and strength to do everyday tasks
- Have fewer aches and pains
- Prevent falls and other injuries
- Sleep better
- Improve your mood
- Be more confident about your abilities
- Feel good about yourself and life

Looking for more reasons to be active? Being active can also help you prevent or improve many health problems. For example:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Breast or colon cancer
- Arthritis
- Overweight or obesity
- Muscle loss
- Osteoporosis (weakened bones)



Where to Begin

Ask your doctor which activities to do and which ones to avoid. Keep in mind that physical activity does not need to be strenuous to have health benefits.

You may want to look for a fitness trainer who has worked with people with limited mobility. Some trainers are certified by the National Center on Physical Activity and Disabilities (www.ncpad.org/).

Choose activities you enjoy and that fit your life. For example, if you are in a wheelchair, you might want to try:

- Wheelchair sports (such as track, tennis, soccer, archery, baseball, and fencing) See www.wsusa.org.
- Basketball, volleyball, using a manual wheelchair
- A wheelchair treadmill
- A wheelchair ergometer (rowing machine)
- Wearing wrist weight cuffs

Talk with your doctor before starting or increasing any exercise program. Your doctor may advise you to try certain exercises or avoid others.



A healthier life is on the line for you!

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UPMC HEALTH PLAN

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Becoming Active for Those with Limited Mobility

- Swimming
- Kayaking
- Martial arts
- A hand cyclist (a bike powered by your arms instead of your legs)
- Resistance exercises for your upper body

If you have arthritis, avoid activities that stress the affected joints. Choose low-impact activities and vary them from day to day. Examples include:

- Swimming
- Water aerobics
- Cross-country skiing
- Walking on soft surfaces
- Low-impact aerobics
- Rowing (avoid if you have arthritis in the elbows)
- Biking (avoid if you have arthritis in the knees)
- Using an elliptical glider
- Yoga (modified to your needs)

Being active with friends or family can help you get started and stick with it.

Include aerobic activity on most days of the week.

- Examples: swimming, using a manual wheelchair, biking, and rowing
- Uses the large muscles of your arms and/or legs
- Makes your heart and lungs do more work than usual
- Can make your heart, lungs, and blood vessels stronger

Include muscle strengthening on at least two days a week.

- Examples: lifting hand weights, doing exercises like push-ups and sit-ups, working out on machines at a gym, using resistance bands (long, wide rubber strips that stretch)
- Makes your muscles do more work than usual
- Improves strength
- Increases your bone density
- Improves balance
- Note: Use proper form to avoid injuries. A fitness trainer or physical therapist can help you learn how to do each exercise.



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Start with what you can do. Build up slowly. If you haven't been active in a long time, start by doing an activity for 5 to 10 minutes on three days a week. Once you feel comfortable, do the activity for a little longer each time. Then do it on more days a week. Or, add new activities.

- Build up to at least 150 minutes each week of moderate aerobic activity. For example, use a manual wheelchair for 30 minutes on five or more days a week. The goal is to do at least 10 minutes at a time.
- A moderate activity is one that lets you talk while you are doing it, but not sing. Examples include using a manual wheelchair or hand cyclist and doing water aerobics.
- Don't compare yourself to others. Go at your own pace. Stop when you need to. Some activity is always better than none! But also challenge yourself. Being active for longer amounts of time has more health benefits. So does participating in activities that require more effort.

Be Safe

- Warm up and cool down. Do a few minutes of easy movement before and after being active.
- Wear comfortable clothing. Dress for the weather.
- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after you are active. Do this even if you're not thirsty.
- Don't overdo it. Listen to your body. If you feel pain at any time while being active, stop right away!
- Seek medical care right away if you have any of these signs:
 - Dizziness or faintness
 - Chest pain or tightness
 - Severe shortness of breath
 - Pain in an arm or your jaw
 - Excessive tiredness
 - An irregular heartbeat



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Make a Plan to Be Active

Think about the coming week. In the chart below, make a plan to be active.

Day	Activity, Where, When	Minutes
Tuesday	Wheelchair basketball at the YMCA, 7 p.m.	30
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Total minutes		



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