

Exercise

Sticking to your exercise programme

Common problems

We all set out with the best intentions, but sometimes we let things slip.

This guide will help you to achieve your goals.



Problem

Lack of time

Solution

Plan your week ahead and book exercise sessions into your diary.

Plan physical activity into your daily routine:

- Walk or ride your bike to the shops
- Exercise while you watch TV
- Park your car further away in the car park
- Get off the bus a stop earlier
- Use the stairs rather than the lift
- Take a walking break instead of a coffee break

Peer or family pressure

Explain your goals to friends and family. Ask them to support you, or invite them to exercise with you.

Lack of energy

Exercising will give you more energy, if you're feeling lethargic go for a short walk to freshen you up.
Plan your activity – schedule it in your diary for times in the day or week when you feel most energetic.

Lack of motivation

Plan ahead, set goals and reward yourself:

- Make physical activity a regular part of your daily or weekly schedule
- Commit it to your diary
- Invite a friend to exercise with you on a regular basis
- Join an exercise group or class or a gym

Use a personal trainer once a week or fortnight to give you focus when you first get started.

Weather

Develop a number of regular activities that you participate in that also give you options if the weather is bad:

- Indoor cycling
- Aerobic classes
- Dance classes
- Home circuit training
- Wii fitness

Treat outdoor activities that depend on weather conditions, as a "bonus" activity that is possible when the weather and circumstances permit. Being involved in a variety of activities will also stop you getting bored and help with motivation.

Exercise

Sticking to your exercise programme contd.

Common problems

How to stick to your exercise programme

Did you know that less than one-third of those who begin an exercise programme are still exercising by the end of their first year?

The good news is that by knowing what to expect, and developing strategies to overcome the stumbling blocks, you can beat these odds quite easily.

Week 1

High risk of drop out

Many people attempt "too much too soon", which often leads to soreness, fatigue and/or injuries – this is the biggest cause of dropping out in or after the first week.

Your Strategy

Begin slowly, and always warm up, cool down and stretch properly to help prevent soreness and injuries. Work at your own level and gradually increase the duration of your sessions and the level of difficulty. It is natural to feel uneasy at this point. Plan your exercise time into your weekly diary and ensure close friends/colleagues and relatives know you have started to exercise and ask them to offer encouragement and support.

Week 2-8

Unrealistic Expectations

Enthusiasm can often wane when the weight doesn't drop off, or your fitness levels don't develop overnight. Some people do see rapid results; other people just take a little longer. Concentrate on how you feel rather than how you look.

Your Strategy

Don't expect immediate dramatic changes in your body shape or weight loss. (Doctors recommend losing a maximum of one to two pounds per week). Although changes are happening internally, most physical changes or external benefits take time to develop. However, you will start to feel happier, healthier, more energetic and more confident very quickly. So focus on how much better you feel for the first few months rather than any physical changes.

Months 2 - 6

Commitment crisis

Physical changes should have become more obvious at this stage. Increased fitness, reduced blood pressure, increased energy levels; muscle mass increase and weight loss are all possible benefits. So why do one out of every two exercisers give up by the end of the sixth month? It comes down to commitment - other things get in the way - vacations, illnesses or visiting in-laws invariably cause missed sessions, which can further weaken resolve.

Your strategy

If you've been doing exercises that you really don't enjoy, you're likely to quit. Make sure you find an exercise or activity that you like – one that fits your personality or needs. Consider when and how you exercise (e.g. early morning vs. night time workouts, or individual vs. group activity). Don't be scared to try different activities – varying what you do helps maintain interest and motivation.

6 + months

It's a habit

When you have exercised regularly for 6+months, it is usually considered that you have created a habit. It will now seem natural to exercise and the barriers are less apparent. You have built exercise into your life. It is at this time that you normally see the greatest gains (stronger heart, lungs, joints and muscles; better stamina; reduced blood pressure, cholesterol, weight and body fat). But stumbling blocks will appear.

Your strategy

Plan for setbacks. Try different types of exercise. Join a group or club. Set yourself long-term goals that give you something to plan or train for. Take a seasonal approach where you participate in different activities depending on the season.