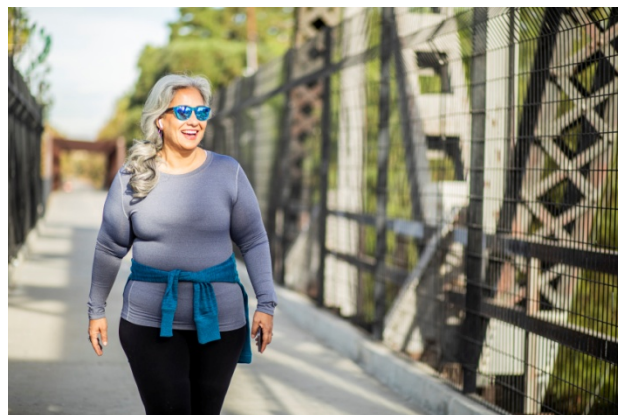


# It's About Balance—the Importance of Exercise in Maintaining Healthy Weight

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Exercise is a crucial component of managing obesity and maintaining a healthy body weight, but the health benefits go far beyond the number on the scale or a perfect physique. Exercise impacts virtually every body system. Among its many amazing abilities, exercise can:

- Strengthen the cardiovascular system, reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke;
- Improve the lung's ability to oxygenate blood to transport to the rest of the body;
- Release endorphins (“happy hormones”), improve mental health, decrease stress, and improve energy;
- Affect the hormones responsible for increasing a sensation of fullness, decreasing hunger;
- Decrease insulin resistance and improve blood sugar regulation, reducing the risk of obesity and type-two diabetes;
- Significantly slow down age-related bone- and muscle loss, reducing the risk of falls and improving balance;
- Reduce the risk of multiple cancers, including breast and colon cancer, reduces inflammation and improves the immune system; and,
- Make people feel good!



How much exercise is enough to provide these benefits? The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the American Heart Association recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity a week (preferably a combination of the two) and strength training exercises twice a week. But how does one fit this in? Simply put, every little bit helps. Starting with several short walks throughout the day will increase your stamina to build up to a longer workout. Try parking farther from the door at work, taking a short walk around the office a few times a day, and taking the stairs at least once a day. Wearing a pedometer allows you to track the number of steps you take in a day. A good goal is to achieve 6,000 to 10,000 steps per day, equal to walking 3 to 5 miles. For someone more familiar with exercising, looking to get back into it, or hoping to increase motivation, there are numerous free online videos that allow the flexibility to exercise at home.

At **CMC's New England Weight Management Institute**, we help our patients develop a sustainable and enjoyable relationship to physical activity. It is important to make short-term, achievable goals, have realistic expectations, and keep track of your progress to ensure long-term success. You'll be surprised by the progress you can make and how good you will feel by incorporating any amount of activity into your daily routine. Don't be too hard on yourself. Life happens. If you fall off track, pick up where you left off. Exercise should be enjoyable and sustainable, so try going back to something you once enjoyed doing or try something you've always wanted to do. The benefits are many and anything is better than nothing. Start small, set goals, and enjoy!



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