ALBERTA CENTRE FOR
Active Living
Research and education
for the promotion of physical activity

Frequently Asked Question

Why am I inactive and why would I want to be more active?

Although you may not be physically active right now, you may want to be more active someday. How can you start thinking more about physical activity? First of all, it may be helpful to look at the challenges and benefits of being physically active. This may help you begin to think about the role physical activity can play in your life.

Most people who are physically inactive can think of reasons why they are not active and why they should stay inactive. Here are some common reasons people give for being inactive and some ideas to overcome these challenges:

- **"I don't have time."**

  Becoming active means building physical activity into your busy schedule. You can gain benefits of physical activity for your heart, lungs and muscles by doing 10 minutes of activities throughout the day that add up to 30 minutes or more daily. This means that physical activity doesn't have to take a lot of time or take place at a gym. Physical activity can be part of your daily routine.

  Here are a few ideas to help you get started:

  ◊ Park farther from the entrances of stores or work.
  ◊ Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
  ◊ Vacuum your house.
  ◊ Make an appointment with yourself. Block off time on your schedule to be active, just as you would for an important meeting.
  ◊ Have a plan to deal with the unexpected. For example, you can move activities to a different time/date within the next few days instead of skipping them.

- **"I don't like to exercise."**

  Some people have had bad experiences in gym class or when they have tried to exercise. Sweating and struggling to catch your breath can be unpleasant and not having the skill to do an activity can also be discouraging. However, you can still benefit from activities that aren't so intense that you get sweaty or short of breath. You don't have to be a skilled athlete to be active. Instead, think about how you could spend more time on the physical activities you already do and enjoy, such as gardening or playing with your kids.

- **"I'll get sore muscles."**

  When you're becoming active, you're moving your muscles in new and different ways. You might get sore when you first become active. You can avoid some soreness by not pushing

yourself too hard and by warming-up and colling down before and after the activity. You may find stretching after an activity beneficial as well. If you're active regularly, you may be less likely to get hurt in the long term because regular activity helps to keep your muscles and bones strong and can help your balance and coordination.

- **"I don't have enough money to exercise."**

  Joining a health club or buying equipment can be expensive. However, making physical activity a part of your life and enjoying the health benefits can simply mean increasing how much time you spend on everyday activities such as walking or gardening. You could even make money being active by walking your neighbour's dog or delivering the community newspapers!

- **"I might get hurt during exercise."**

  Most injuries that occur during exercise can be avoided. Even with a health problem, most people can increase their activity level safely. If you have a health problem, talk to your doctor about starting to exercise to find out how to safely increase your activity level.

- **"I'm too tired to exercise."**

  With their busy lifestyles, many people feel too tired to exercise. Activities, done throughout the day that add up to 30 minutes or more, don't have to involve a large amount of effort. Once you become healthier and stronger, daily tasks will seem easier and you will have more energy for more physical activity.

Here are some other good reasons to be more physically active:

- It's fun!
- It's good for your body and your mind!
- It can help you to relax.

To be or not to be active

At this point, you can weigh the pros and cons of being inactive. Think about how being inactive affects you and your health. Now, think about how being more active could benefit you. Listing the positives and negatives of physical activity will get you thinking about it. Also, by weighing the risks and the benefits, you will form a balanced view of physical activity. Good luck!

Resources:

- Active living FAQs (Alberta Centre for Active Living)—Information on the benefits of being active, how to get started and stay active.
- Benefits of Physical Activity (ParticipACTION).
- Physical Activity for Everyone: Getting Started (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – US).

This article is adapted with permission from Marcus,BH, Taylor, E, Simkin, L. Do I need this? Jump start to health. Providence, RI: Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine, Miriam Hospital; 1992..

Last Updated: 2012-05-29. This FAQ was created by the Alberta Centre for Active Living. Production of this material has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.