



## How To Be Physically Active Throughout Your Day

Physical activity is any activity that gets your body moving or activates your muscles; it may be accumulated throughout the day as you do your usual routine. It also includes exercise. Exercise refers to focused physical activity, usually for at least 10 minutes or more at a time.

### Start With Walking

We will concentrate on walking as a way of increasing your daily steps. Some walking may be *exercise* with a focus on going for a planned walk for at least 10 minutes or more. Other times you may accumulate some steps throughout your day, for example as you go upstairs or pick up some food at a grocery store down the street. Increasing your daily step counts and adding walks into your day are great ways to get active and have a healthy pregnancy. You may want to use a step counter to track your steps. You can set a daily step count goal for yourself. In general, 8000 to 10000 steps per day is considered an active day. But remember, all walking and all steps count, so start at a level that works best for you. If you have always been pretty active, 8000 to 10000 steps may be a good goal. If you haven't been as active, you may want to start lower and build up. You can gradually progress as you feel comfortable.

Here are some tips and tricks to help you achieve your step goals”

- Use a step tracker to see how you're doing
- Take quick walking breaks during long periods of sitting. For example, at work you could walk to the further washroom to add more steps.
- Schedule your walks so it is already planned into your day
- See if you can replace a time that you normally aren't getting steps with some more movement such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator, and choose activities that you enjoy but will also get you up and moving such as walking with your kids, walking at the mall, or walking with a friend.

In addition to walking and step counts, some other exercises you may want to consider include stationary bicycles, pool exercises, and light intensity aerobic classes for pregnancy. The activities you choose should focus on your large muscle groups. YAvoid activities that increase your risk of falling.

### Light to Moderate Intensity

When you are walking or doing any other exercise, you want to aim for what is called a light to moderate intensity. What is moderate for one person may be different for someone else, though. There are three ways you can make sure that you are exercising at an appropriate intensity level for you.

1. You can think about how you're feeling and your level of tiredness. You want to be working at a rate that you would classify as “somewhat hard”, or in other words, on a scale of 1-20 you're working at about level 12 to 14.

2. You can also use the ‘talk test’. While you’re out for a walk, you should be able to maintain a conversation without feeling short of breath- but you may not be able to sing.
3. If you have access to a heart rate monitor, you can also use this as a measure of intensity by making sure you are within target heart rate zones. The target heart rate zones are listed in the PARmedX for pregnancy, the web link is also posted on the [Physical Activity page](#).

### **Resistance Training**

You can also do some light resistance training. Choose lighter weights, ones that will allow you to achieve at least 12-15 repetitions without difficulty and without holding your breath. Or consider using a resistance band if that is more comfortable.

And you don’t have to be in a gym or use gym equipment to do resistance training. You could use items you have at home, such as large soup cans, and incorporate these exercises into your daily routine, maybe while you enjoy a TV show. Click on the link in the video description for more ideas on how to get active without a gym or without any gym equipment.

### **Sample Program**

Here is an example of a walking program you may want to consider.

1. **Frequency of exercise:** Maybe add a walk 3-4 times per week, and think about how you can add activity throughout your day to increase your daily steps.
2. **Intensity of exercise:** Aim for a light to moderate intensity, listen to your body and move at a level that you feel comfortable.
3. **Time of exercise:** Start at 10-15 minutes and as you feel comfortable progress to 30 minutes for a planned walk. But remember, activity can be added throughout your day in short bouts of movement, striving towards your daily step count goals.
4. **Type of exercise,** walking is an amazing exercise that gets all your major muscle groups moving!

This is called a FITT goal, which means it is a specific goal that includes frequency, intensity, time and type. When we make specific and daily goals, we are more likely to follow through but remember, you can modify your goals at any time. If there is ever a day you miss, that is okay! Start where you feel comfortable and make changes as needed.

As you progress to the end of your pregnancy, we want to still encourage you to be active but if you do not reach your goal, do not be discouraged. Just do your best. Tomorrow is another new day. Watch our other videos to learn more about some safety reminders and cautions you need to know about.

<https://activepatient.ca/gdm>