

How to Start Working Out After a Long Break

Source: Sunlife

Have your exercise plans fallen by the wayside due to quarantine life? During lockdown, you may have dealt with limited space, gym closures or just a lack of motivation.

Now that restrictions are winding down, you might be wondering how to start exercising again – and if it's possible to get back on track.

To start, don't feel guilty about not exercising. We're all living in unusual times and making the best of it. The good news is you can always start a new exercise program whenever you feel ready.

As you transition to life after COVID-19, you might be thinking of restarting your workout routine. But how do you start to get back in shape post-quarantine? Here are some tips:

1. Talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program

Do you have any previous injuries? Are there any health problems in your medical history? In such cases, you may want to consult with your doctor before you start exercising. This may mean going in for a physical to check your overall health.

You don't need a doctor's approval for simple exercises like walking. However, Harvard Medical School says it's best to check with your doctor before starting an exercise program if:

- you're very unsteady on your feet,
- you experience dizziness or take medication that makes you feel dizzy, or
- you have a history of heart disease, asthma, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, or diabetes.

2. Find your current fitness level

It's a good idea to establish your current baseline fitness level before starting an exercise plan. This allows you to find an exercise regime that is comfortable for you. Plus, it gives you a base to track your progress.

You can work with a specialist like a personal trainer or a physical therapist. Or you can create your own assessment by finding how many push-ups, squats or other basic exercises you can do in a set amount of time.

If you want to be guided by the experts, you can [follow a plan](#) provided by [recognized medical and fitness sources](#).

3. Build your own workout routine

Once you've figured out your fitness level, you can design your plan to meet your goals. The Government of Canada [recommends 2.5 hours of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity](#) a week.

That recommended 2.5 hours includes all movement. Exercise can include walks to and from work, playing with the kids, bike rides or walks. It's all about getting up and moving.

Do you prefer ready-made plans? There are several apps that will provide a plan for you based on your age, fitness levels and desired goals.

To keep your motivation going, be sure to create a plan that includes activities you enjoy – not ones you dread.

4. Choose the right workout clothes

Having the right shoes and other performance apparel can help keep you comfortable while you're moving.

5. Track your fitness progress

Reaching your fitness goals often means making exercise a regular habit. One way of creating that habit is to keep track of your progress.

You can start tracking how many times a week you exercised and any new accomplishments. This may include:

- moving from modified to full push-ups,
- a personal best time for your runs or
- an increase in your weights.

Track your accomplishments and use that to keep you motivated.

6. Take small steps to reaching your fitness goals

One of the reasons we stop exercising is often that we start too hard, too fast. It might actually be counter-productive to make commitments like working out for an hour every day or running 20 kilometres in the first week. Pushing yourself that hard can lead to soreness or even injury, which may cause you to give up.

Instead, start slow and build on that foundation. Instead of running a full 5K, start by walking, going for a bike ride or using lighter weights. Then, gradually increase the intensity.

7. Stretch your muscles

It's critical to incorporate stretching into your new exercise program. Harvard Medical School also found that stretching keeps muscles strong and flexible. Without stretching, muscles can become short and tight. That makes them weak and puts you at risk for

muscle damage, strains, soreness and joint pain. Stretch out your full muscle group for at least 30 seconds each time.

8. Get a virtual fitness buddy

Exercising with a friend or as part of a group can help with motivation. But in a social-distance world, you might need to modify this best practice. You can still buddy-up with a friend via text or by starting a program together on the same app. Knowing you have a friend who is supporting you can help you stick to your plan.

9. Know it's never too late to start exercising

If you haven't exercised for a long time, or ever, there's no need to beat yourself up. The results of exercise are cumulative, so it's truly never too late to see the health benefits. And you can always restart your plan even if you haven't exercised for months or years.

There are exercises for everyone, no matter the age, fitness level or the amount of space. Find something you enjoy doing and reap the benefits of moving. You'll soon see results in your physical health – and your mental health as well.