Improving Access to Exercise in Rural Vermont

Why does exercise matter?

- Regular physical exercise can reduce the risk of health problems including
    - Heart disease
    - Stroke
    - High blood pressure
    - Type 2 diabetes
    - Some cancers including colon and breast
    - Bone Loss
    - Memory Loss
- If you already have any of the above health problems, exercise can help you treat and manage many of them.
- Regular exercise has also been shown to improve mood, energy and sleep.
- Exercise increases the total calories burned and helps with weight loss.

How much exercise should I be doing?

- The CDC states that every adult should aim to get at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week, such as 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week. Adults also should get at least 2 days of muscle strengthening activities per week.
- Examples of moderate intensity exercises are brisk walking, dancing, swimming laps, water aerobics, playing tennis (doubles), gardening, and vacuuming. You should notice your heart rate and breathing rate increase but you should be able to still talk.
- Muscle strengthening exercise should hit all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms.

I am out of shape. Where do I start?

- Set realistic goals for yourself – start small and track your progress
- Choose activities you enjoy – you're more likely to stick with it if it's fun!
- Start with low impact exercises like Yoga, walking or swimming to reduce the risk of injury
- Create a routine – consistency is key
- Warm up and cool down – ease into any hard exercise and end with a cool-down to prevent injury
- Listen to your body – If you're experiencing pain or discomfort after exercise take a break and adjust your routine if necessary
- Find a buddy! – Staying consistent and accountable is easier if you are not doing it alone

I don't have enough time to exercise!

- Any exercise is beneficial. Try to fit it in where you can. Hard exercise such as jogging or running at a pace where you can no longer comfortably hold a conversation counts double towards the 150 minute recommendation. Even squeezing in a 75 minute hard hike on your day off could satisfy the 150 minutes for the week.

Oliver Koch, Larner College of Medicine Class of 2027

Strength Training Exercises

Strength Training increases your muscle mass, bone mass and joint strength and is proven to help you live a long and healthy life. It increases the amount of calories you burn at rest and helps maintain a healthy weight and lower your blood sugar.

Squats – 2-3 sets of 10-15 repetitions
Level 1: get up out of a chair and sit back down
Level 2: Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and lower your body as if sitting in a chair, then return to standing.
Level 3: Add weights*

Push-Ups – 2-3 sets of 10-15 repetitions
Level 1: Stand upright and lean forward bracing yourself against a wall or a counter top with your arms shoulder-width apart. Let yourself come close to the wall and then push yourself back up again.
Level 2: With your knees on the ground, get into a plank position, lower your body until your chest nearly touches the ground, then push yourself back up.
Level 3: Same as level 2 but with your legs straight so that only your feet and hands are touching the ground

Plank – 20-30 seconds, gradually increase
Level 1: hold a Level 2 push-up position with your elbows and forearms on the ground, while trying to maintain a straight back.
Level 2: Hold a Level 3 push-up position with your elbows and forearms on the ground, while trying to maintain a straight line from your head to your heels

Lunges – 2-3 sets of 10 repetitions per leg
Level 1: Step forward with one leg, lower your hips until both knees are bent at about 90 degrees, then return to standing, alternate legs.
Level 2: Add weights*

Bicep Curls – 2-3 sets of 10-15 repetitions
Hold weights* or bands with palms facing up, curl them toward your shoulders and lower back down. The weight should be heavy enough that you struggle to complete your last repetition.

Seated Leg Lifts – 2-3 sets of 10 repetitions per leg
Sit on a chair, lift one leg straight out, hold for a few seconds and lower it back down. Alternate legs.

Chair Dips - 2-3 sets of 10 repetitions
Level 1: Sit on the edge of a chair, place your hands next to your hips, slide your hips off the chair, and lower your body by bending your elbows. Make sure that your knees are bent roughly 90 degrees.
Level 2: Same as level 1except straighten your legs
Level 3: Same as level 2 but elevate your feet on a piece of furniture.

*you don’t have to buy exercise weights, household items like water bottles, water jugs, containers and detergent jugs work great!

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Cardio

Cardio exercises help strengthen your heart, improve blood pressure and cholesterol and help prevent heart disease. They burn calories and help you control your blood sugar. They also help you strengthen your joints, reduce stress and improve your mood

Walking

Walking at a brisk pace qualifies as moderate intensity exercise. You should feel your heart rate and breathing get faster but you should be able to have a conversation.

Jumping Jacks

Start with your feet together and arms at your sides, jump to spread your legs while raising your arms overhead, and jump back to the starting position. Start with 2-3 sets of 20-30 jumping jacks and increase as tolerated.

Swimming

Swimming is great cardio exercise as it is low-impact for your joints and engages a wide range of muscles in your body including your core, back and upper body.

Running

Running is a popular and effective cardio exercise that can be done virtually anywhere. It's a great way to improve heart health, endurance, and burn calories.

Cycling

Cycling is another effective cardio exercise that can be done indoors or outdoors. It's a good way to improve cardiovascular health, strength, and endurance.

Jumping Rope

Jumping rope is a fun and effective cardio exercise that can be done at home or in the gym. It's a great way to improve cardiovascular health, coordination, and burn calories.

Dancing

Dancing is a fun and engaging cardio exercise that can be done to music. It's a great way to improve cardiovascular health, coordination, and burn calories.

Stair Climbing: Stair climbing is a high-intensity cardio exercise that can be done at home or in a gym. It's a great way to improve cardiovascular health, strength, and endurance.

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Stretches

Stretching after exercising can help minimize soreness, prevent injury and keep you on track to meet your goals.

Standing Calf Stretch:
Lean against a wall or solid object, extend one leg back, and gently push your heel down to feel the stretch in your calf.

Standing or Seated Inner Thigh Stretch:
Sit or stand with legs slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, and gently bend one knee, leaning towards it to feel the stretch in your inner thigh.

Standing or Seated Hamstring Stretch:
Reach towards your toes while keeping your legs straight (standing or seated) to feel a stretch in the back of your thighs.

Quad Stretch:
Bend one leg back, grasping your ankle or foot and gently pulling it towards your buttocks to stretch the front of your thigh.

Hip Flexor Stretch:
Step one leg forward into a lunge position and gently lean forward, feeling the stretch in the front of the hip of the back leg.

Standing Lat Stretch:
Reach one arm overhead and gently lean to the opposite side, feeling a stretch in your side and back.

Standing Chest Stretch:
Place your forearms on a doorframe and gently lean forward to open up your chest.

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Winter-specific Ideas

We understand that winter can be particularly challenging when it comes to finding motivation to exercise. Here are a few tips, tricks and ideas:

Increased tiredness & lack of motivation (Seasonal Depression)

Shorter days, and colder temperatures mean that we tend to spend less time outdoors during the winter. However, multiple studies have found that exercising, especially doing so outdoors during the winter months can significantly improve symptoms of seasonal depression.

Clothing

Make sure to dress in layers. Exercise – even in icy cold conditions – can get you pretty warm pretty fast. It's a great advantage if you can easily take off or put back on a layer as you get warm or cool back off.

Winter Hiking

Hiking in winter offers beautiful landscapes without the crowds and the bugs you encounter in summer. Many trails are usable without snow shoes. We suggest checking hiking websites like AllTrails for updated trail conditions. Ideally wear winter boots and consider getting spikes you can put on your boots for icy conditions.

Snow Shoeing

The easiest way to continue walking in winter time is to use snow shoes. Many snow shoes are available at a price point around $50 or even cheaper if bought used on sites like Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist.

Cross Country Skiing

Newport is home to over 18 miles of cross country ski trails ready for you to explore. Unlike its downhill cousin, cross country skiing does not require resort passes and packs even more of a cardio punch. Cross country skis can be pricey but keep an eye out for used ones on Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist

Ice Skating/ Ice Hockey

Ice skating or playing a friendly game of pond hockey are another great way to stay physically and socially active during winter time.

Local Gyms

Several local gyms offer affordable memberships. Having a space to exercise that isn't your home and having supportive people around you can be a great motivator to stick with your exercise goals, even during the winter.

YouTube

YouTube is a great repository for exercise videos that you can work along to from the comfort of your home.

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