Are you ready to decrease your risk of disease? Live and feel better? Reduce stress? Lower your weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels? Well then, it is time to “get off the couch and get moving.” Consider taking a walk or a step-aerobics class, riding a bicycle, or raking the leaves. Do it for 30 to 60 minutes, three to six days a week. Don’t be one of the 88 percent of Americans who find exercise a bit of a bore, or who find 10 other activities to do instead of exercising. Do you justify your poor physical fitness by saying it is a normal sign of aging? Exercise is one of the best ways to treat and prevent illness and/or injuries.

Benefits of exercise:
- Improves circulation
- Aids digestion
- Reduces fatigue
- Improves endurance
- Strengthens muscles, bones and ligaments
- Enhances posture, poise and agility
- Helps induce sound sleep
- Balances emotions
- Sharpens the mental powers
- Increases resistance to disease
- Helps control weight
- Improves mental outlook and self-esteem

Getting started on an exercise program:
- Consult your physician before beginning any activity.
- Find an activity or activities that you enjoy. Exercise that is fun often becomes a habit.
- Try to make exercise part of your daily routine. Exercise regularly and you will be developing a lifestyle habit.
- Find a place to exercise. Whether you select a gym, outdoor track, or your home, be sure that the location you choose allows you to exercise year-round, or consider alternating locations with the seasons.
- Find a partner if you can. An exercise partner can help keep things interesting and more enjoyable. (A workout goes faster when you have someone to talk to.)
- Buy some gear. Buy yourself something special to wear when you work out: a pair of quality walking or running shoes, a new sweatshirt, or use a portable radio or tape player and headphones to keep yourself amused.
- Change your routine. If you get bored with an activity—if it gets to be a chore—don’t hesitate to change your routine. Do something new, or put a new twist on something you’re doing now.
- Involve your family. Get your family involved in exercise. This can be real quality time for you and your family.
- Make seasonal changes. Changing your workout activities from season to season adds spice to an exercise program.
- Check the intensity of your workout. Being able to talk while exercising indicates that the intensity is probably appropriate. You may wish to estimate your training heart rate (THR) and exercise within that range.

To determine your training heart rate, follow this equation:
1. 220 – Age = maximum heart rate (MHR)
2. Multiply 0.60 to 0.85 by your MHR = training heart rate zone (THR)
3. To see if you are exercising within your THR, check your pulse at the wrist, counting for 15 seconds and multiply the number by 4 to determine your heart rate per minute.
- Begin and end all activities with a warm-up and cool-down.
- Enjoy the health benefits of being fit.

Start with warm-up:
A good warm-up before aerobic training increases body temperature and heart rate which benefits overall physical performance and reduces the risk of muscle injuries. What to do: Engage in 3-5 minutes of slow aerobic activity such as walking or light calisthenics.

Next, add aerobic training:
Frequency: 3-6 days per week
Intensity: Exercise at your own pace and how you feel
Time/duration: Minimum aerobic training time is 20 minutes. However, the recommended 30-60 minutes of activity can be done all at once or broken into smaller segments of 10-15 minutes throughout the day to achieve significant health benefits.

Finally, cool-down:
At the end of aerobic training it’s important to slowly decrease your heart rate by keeping the large muscle groups moving for at least 3-5 minutes. Stopping suddenly may cause light-headedness or fainting. Keep your legs and feet moving.

Exercise Precautions:
- Extreme breathlessness
- Prolonged fatigue (30-60 minutes post-exercise)
- Continuous muscle or joint soreness
- Nausea
- Pounding in the head
- High heart rate (above your THR)
Avoid building your program too fast, too soon. Musculoskeletal pains commonly occur in the first two weeks, but normally disappear shortly thereafter. Using proper shoes is important. Should symptoms continue, consult your doctor.

Note: This educational information is not intended to substitute for expert health and medical advice or treatment. The information is designed to help you make informed choices about your health. Please consult your medical professional for questions or information that is specific to your medical condition.