

Week 1: Getting Started

So, you're ready to get moving. Congratulations-- you have made an important and worthwhile decision to improve your health! By participating in a physical activity program, you can improve your cardiovascular health, lose weight, decrease stress, lower your blood pressure and cholesterol, increase your energy level, and so much more! Overall, you'll notice that you feel better! Here are some tips to start you out on the right foot.

- Before you get moving, assess your fitness level. Fitness testing is an important first step in determining which training program you should focus on during the next eight weeks. Strictly Running provides you with a free fitness test that you can do on your own-- all you need is a place to walk or run or a treadmill. Click [here](#) for the President's Challenge Fitness Test.
 - If you're interested in a comprehensive fitness test, including cardiovascular endurance, strength and flexibility, call Health Directions at 791-2113. Fitness testing measures and establishes a baseline level of fitness that can be compared to national normative information. This two-session process includes 1.) the actual testing and collection of biometric information and 2.) a follow-up consultation to review results and discuss exercise recommendations. Cost is \$55 per participant.
- Following your fitness test, you will be able to choose a Strictly Running Training Program to follow for the next eight weeks. These programs have been designed by professionals to help you gradually increase your distance and speed. There are three different training programs:
 - [Couch](#) (beginner)
 - [Walker](#) (intermediate)
 - [Jogger](#) (advanced)
- Be sure to include each of the following in each of your walking or running sessions:
 - **Warm-up:** Before stretching, begin walking at a very easy pace in order to gradually increase your heart rate and prepare your body for exercise by increasing blood flow to the muscles.
 - **Pre-exercise Stretching:** after you have warmed-up your muscles, take a few minutes to stretch your major muscle groups:
 - Head circles:
 - Make 1/4 circles with your head.
 - Start with your ear near your shoulder on one side.
 - Rotate your head around to the front, ending with your ear near the shoulder on the other side. Do not roll your neck to the back.
 - Roll your head back to the other side.
 - Repeat 5-10 times.
 - Arm circles:

- With one arm at a time, make backwards arm circle with your palm facing out, thumb pointed up.
- Repeat 10-15 times with each arm.
- Then make forward arm circles with palm facing in, thumb pointed down, and repeat 10-15 times.
- Hip stretch:
 - Stand up, take a half-step back with the right foot.
 - Bend your left (forward) knee and shift your weight back to your right hip until you feel the stretch in front of your right hip.
 - Hold for 10 seconds the switch.
- Quadriceps (thigh) stretch:
 - Stand up straight, holding onto a wall for support.
 - Bend your knee behind you so that you can grasp your foot, pointing your knee straight down to the ground. Feel the stretch right above your knee.
 - Hold for 15-30 seconds, then switch.
- Gastrocnemius (calf) stretch:
 - Stand an arm's-length from the wall.
 - Lean into wall, bracing yourself with your arms.
 - Place one leg forward with knee bent - this leg will not support your weight.
 - Keep other leg back with knee straight and heel down.
 - Keeping back straight, move hips toward wall until you feel a stretch.
 - Hold 30 seconds and then repeat with other leg.
- Soleus (lower calf) stretch:
 - From the same position as the gastrocnemius calf stretch, bend the rear knee.
 - Hold for 15-20 seconds repeat with the other leg.
- **Walking/Running:**
 - Breathing: While you're walking or running, it is vital to maintain proper breath so that you don't end up feeling as if you can't breathe. Take breaths in through your nose and mouth and try to find a rhythm that works for you such as two steps while inhaling and 2 steps while exhaling. Try to breath through your diaphragm-- not your chest.
 - Form: Keep your head and neck straight without staring at the ground. Make sure your shoulders are low and relaxed and that your hands and arms are not tense. If you're running try keeping a short stride length so that your lower leg lands under your body, not in front. Walkers should take a longer stride.

- **Cool-down:** After completing your exercise, cool down by walking slowly for 5-10 minutes. Cooling down gradually decreases your heart rate back to your normal resting rate.
- **Post-exercise Stretching:** Complete the same stretching exercises following your exercise session. Stretching is a very important aspect of preventing injuries-- especially in new runners.
- **Keep at it!** Do your best to stick with the training schedule. Here are some tips to make this training program part of your daily life-- it's worth it!
 - Schedule it into your day - write it in your daily planner. Treat it as an appointment. You wouldn't skip an appointment with your doctor... so don't skip an appointment with your training session.
 - If you know you won't exercise when you get off of work, try getting up 20-30 minutes earlier to take a brisk walk from home before beginning your day.
 - Remember that just because you miss a day or two due to being sick or a vacation doesn't mean that you can't pick up where you left off once you're back on your regular schedule!

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