

12 Week Do-it-Yourself Fitness Program



Created by Brad Awalt, MS, ACSM
Assistant Manager, Health *Plus*
brad.awalt@vanderbilt.edu

December 2008

Do you have a goal to begin an exercise routine, but not sure how to get started? Health *Plus* can help! You can use this suggested program as a blueprint for your routine. This routine will be based on the recommended fitness guidelines supported by the American Heart Association (AHA) and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). Good luck!

Why participate in a fitness program?

Being active makes you feel better, gives you more energy, improves your mood, and helps you lose weight.

What does a well rounded fitness program include?

1. Cardiovascular activities include walking, swimming, water aerobics, jogging/running, cycling, stair-climbing, using an elliptical trainer, and taking aerobic classes;
2. Strength training exercises consist of using free weights, weight machines, or doing callisthenic exercises such as push-ups or sit-ups. These exercises build strength and endurance in the muscles and joints;
3. Flexibility exercises such as yoga and stretching keep muscles and joints flexible and improve joint range of motion.

What do I need to do before starting in fitness program?

Before starting a physical activity program, check with your health care provider if you:

1. Are inactive and over 40 years old;
2. Have any medical problems;
3. Are over 40 and plan a relatively vigorous exercise program.

Once you have been cleared by your health care provider to start exercising, choose activities that are fun, safe, involve repetitive motion that uses the arms and legs, and build endurance.

Getting Started:

Cardiovascular

Start out with moderate-intensity exercise (comparable to brisk walking).

- Participate in cardio exercise a minimum of 30 minutes five days each week.
- Noticeably accelerate the heart rate. Use the "The Talk Test" to gauge your intensity level. You should be able to carry on a conversation while exercising at a moderate intensity level.
- Can be accumulated in 10 minute bouts to equal 30 minute minimum.
- Begin slowly and gradually increase frequency, duration, and intensity level.

Want something more vigorous?

- Do cardio exercise with intensity level comparable to jogging.
- Do a minimum of 20 minutes on three days each week.
- Experience rapid breathing and a substantial increase in heart rate.

Combinations of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity can be performed to meet this recommendation. For example, a person can meet the recommendation by walking briskly for 30 minutes twice during the week and then jogging for 20 minutes on two other days.

Strength Training

- Perform a minimum of 6 to 10 separate exercises that train the major muscle groups (chest, shoulders, back, arms, abdomen, hips, and legs).
- Do 1-3 sets of each exercise – A set is a group of repetitions without stopping.
- Do 10-12 repetitions – Repetitions are the number of times you perform a specific exercise without stopping.
- Work out 2-3 days per week.
- Perform exercises through a full range of motion.

Flexibility Training

- Perform flexibility exercises that stretch the major muscle groups (chest, shoulders, back, arms, abdomen, hips, and legs).
- Do these a minimum of 2-3 days per week.
- Perform stretches to a position of mild discomfort.
- Hold each stretch 10-30 seconds. DO NOT bounce while in a stretch position.
- Do 3-4 repetitions for each stretch.

Suggested Exercise Plan

Start slowly and gradually increase how long, how often, and how hard you exercise.

Types of cardio exercise include walking, hiking, running, machine-based stair climbing, swimming, cycling, rowing, using an elliptical trainer, cross-country skiing, aerobic dance, dancing, and endurance sports.

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Walk/Cardio for 20-30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 20-30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 20-30 min Stretch	Rest	Rest
2	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Rest
3	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-40 min Stretch	Rest
4	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-40 min Stretch	Rest
5	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-35 min Stretch	Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Rest
6	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30-35 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Rest
7	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30-40 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Rest
8	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30-40 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-60 min Stretch	Rest
9	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-60 min Stretch	Rest
10	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-60 min Stretch	Rest
11	Walk/Cardio for 30 min	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-60 min Stretch	Rest
12	Walk/Cardio for 30 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30-45 min Stretch	Strength training	Walk/Cardio for 30 min OR Rest	Walk/Cardio for 30-60 min Stretch	Rest

Strength Training Exercises

Here are some strength exercises that you can perform to improve your strength and tone your muscles. The strength exercises below use exercise tubing as resistance. You can purchase exercise tubing at any sporting goods store or at discount department stores such as K-Mart, Target, or Wal-Mart.

Chest Press

Sitting in a chair, place the tube around the back of the chair. Grasp tube handles with hands at mid-chest height. Press forward with your hands, extending the arms, but keeping the elbow slightly bent. Be sure to sit upright, and do not round the upper back and shoulders. Return to starting position and repeat.



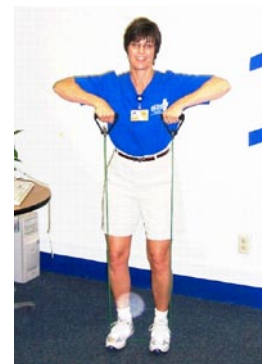
Lunge

Place one foot on the tube and step the opposite foot behind you. Grasp the tube handles and bring hands to shoulders. Bend the front knee so that the front leg is in a 90 degree position, careful that the knee does not extend over the toes. Slowly straighten the leg, but do not lock the knees. Return to starting position and repeat.



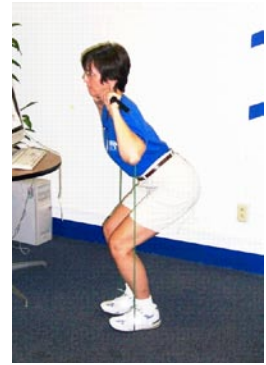
Upright Row

Stand on the tube with feet shoulder distance apart. Grasp tube handles with hands facing toward you. Pull up so that elbows are in line with the shoulders, hands are in front. Shoulders stay down and relaxed. Return to starting position and repeat.



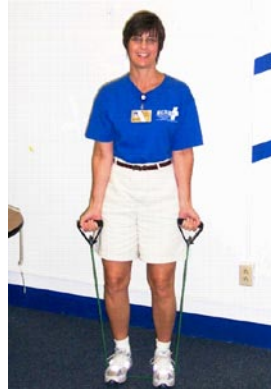
Squat

Stand with feet shoulder distance apart, standing on tube with both feet. Grasp tube handles and bring hands to the shoulders. Slowly lower the body to a sitting position and be careful not to extend the knees over the toes. Return to starting position and repeat.



Bicep Curl

Stand on the tube with feet shoulder distance apart. Grasp tube handles with palms facing forward. Keep elbows close to the body and lift tube handles toward the shoulders. Lower slowly and repeat.



Tricep Kickback

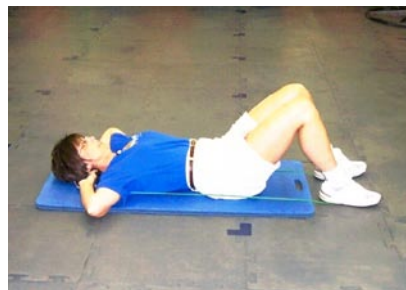
Stand on the tube with feet shoulder distance apart. Bend the knees and bend forward at the waist, careful to keep the back flat. Keeping the arm close to the body, pull the elbow back so the arm is parallel with the floor and is bent in a 90 degree position. Slowly extend the lower arm behind you so that the whole arm is straight. Do not move shoulder or upper arm. Return to starting position and repeat.



Abdominal Crunches

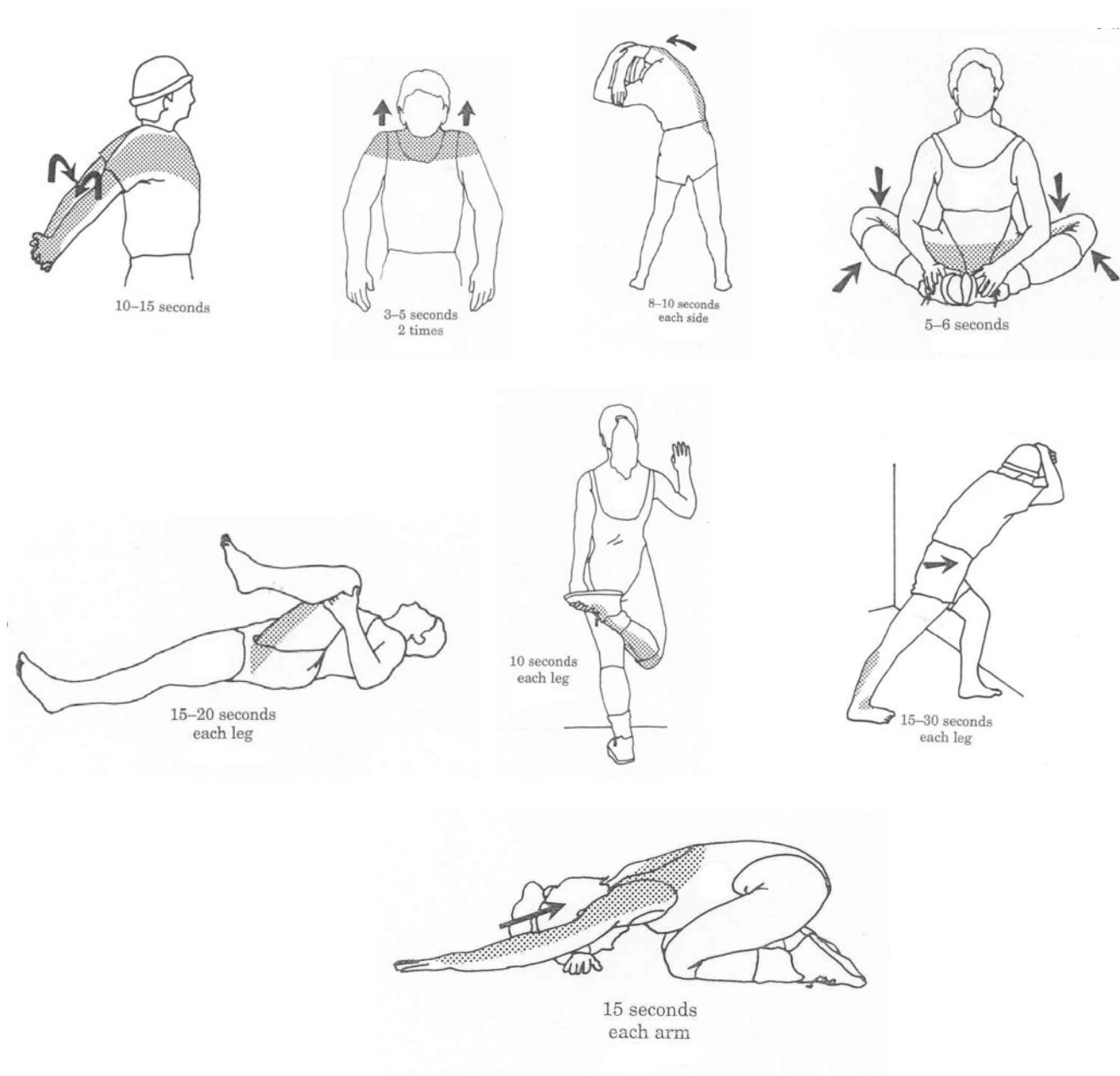
Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Press your lower back into the floor and with your hands behind your head, slowly lift your shoulder blades off the floor. Return to starting position and repeat.

Perform 2 sets of 10-12 repetitions, with 30-60 seconds rest in between sets.



Flexibility Exercises

Below are flexibility exercises that will help you keep muscles and joints flexible and improve joint range of motion.



References:

American Heart Association. Physical Activity and Public Health: Updated Recommendations for Adults From the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2007;116;1081-1093.

Anderson, B. *Stretching*. Bolinas, CA: Shelter Publications, Inc; 2000.