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How am I doing?



If you've been exercising regularly, you'll soon be able to tell when it's time to move ahead in your activities. For example, when you can lift a weight easily 10–15 times, it's time to add more weight in your strength exercises or move to a higher progression level. When your endurance activity no longer feels challenging, it's time to be active a little longer, or make it a little more difficult such as by walking up steeper hills or increasing your pace.

Introduction

The simple tests in this chapter will show you just how far you've come. You might want to test yourself every month or so. Write down your scores each time so you can see your improvement the next time you test yourself. You can record your scores on the monthly progress test in your workbook.



You might want to do these tests for a couple of reasons. Most people make rapid progress soon after they start to increase their physical activity and it's encouraging to see your scores improve after just a month.

These tests are also a good way to let you know if you are continuing to progress and if you need to update your goals.

But remember, it is normal for your improvement to slow down at times. Also remember that each person is different. Some will be able to progress with time; for others, reaching a certain level of activity and staying there is right for their age and ability level.

If you're not ready to do these tests, don't worry, just keep working on your current physical activities until you are.

One last tip: Regardless of whether you do these tests, don't forget to congratulate yourself for your efforts. Tell your family and friends about your achievements. You've made a lot of progress and you're ready for more!



Quick tip

Whether you are testing yourself or actually exercising, your pace should never make you feel dizzy, light-headed or sick in the stomach, and you shouldn't feel pain.

Test yourself

Endurance. Pick a fixed course — the distance from your house to the corner, once around the oval at your local high school or from one end of the shopping centre to the other — whatever is convenient. See how long it takes to walk or run that distance.

Upper-body strength. Count the number of arm curls (see page 41) you can safely do in two minutes. If you are just starting to exercise, you may have to stop and rest before the two minutes are up. That's okay; it still gives you a great starting point to measure your progress.

Lower-body strength. Count the number of chair stands (see page 48) you can safely do in two minutes. You may have to stop and rest before the two minutes are up if you are just starting to exercise. That's okay; you will be able to measure your progress from this starting point.

Balance. Time yourself as you stand on one foot, without support, for as long as possible. Stand near something sturdy to hold on to, in case you lose your balance. Record your score.

Flexibility. If you've had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before you do this test. Sit securely toward the front of a sturdy chair and stretch one leg straight out in front of you with your heel on the floor, toes pointing upward. Bend the other leg so that your foot is flat on the floor. With your elbows slightly bent and your hands palm down, slowly bend forward from your hips (not your waist) and reach as far as you can toward your toes. How far down can you reach until you feel a stretch? Record your scores in your workbook.



**Do each of these tests again in one month
— you should see an improvement!**

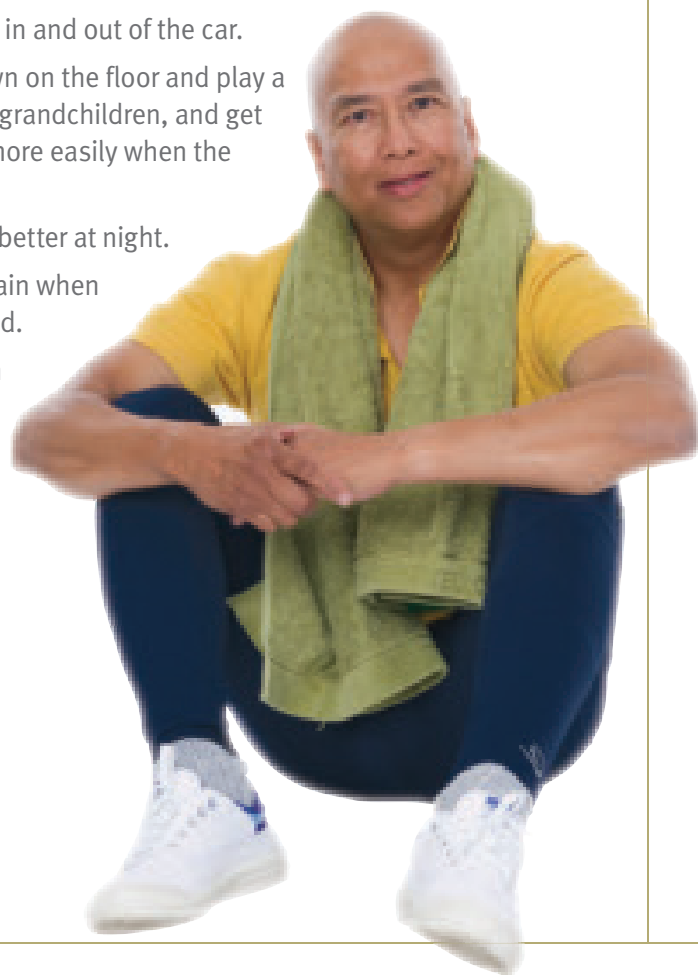


Go here for more information
Review the safety guidelines on page 18 before testing yourself.

Other ways to measure progress

As you become more active, you'll probably notice other signs that you're getting more fit.

- You have more energy.
- Your overall mood and outlook on life have improved.
- It's easier to do your usual daily activities.
- Climbing a couple of flights of stairs is easier.
- It's easier to get in and out of the car.
- You can get down on the floor and play a game with your grandchildren, and get back up again more easily when the game is over.
- You're sleeping better at night.
- You have less pain when you move around.
- Symptoms of an ongoing health condition may improve.



Make it social

Marty's 'activity mates' keep him going:

'Every morning I head out to the shopping centre — not to shop, but to join my mall-walkers group. At 75, I'm one of the youngest members. When I retired, my wife Harriet insisted that we walk every morning. Some of us move at a steady clip through the centre, while others take a slower pace. We count our laps and keep a daily record of our progress — pushing ourselves to go a little faster and a little further.'

When Harriet died unexpectedly, it was quite a blow, but the walkers were my lifeline. They kept me moving when all I wanted to do was sit. At first, I walked because it was something to do each morning. But now, I realise that I like how it feels to be moving. Measuring how fast I can walk gives me goals, something to work toward. I walk and feel stronger every day. I often think of and silently thank her for insisting that we walk together.'