

Tips to start your fitness journey



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Dr Chrystal's vision is to educate and motivate the individual and population towards better health outcomes.

Her mission is to help make sense of the rich Science articles that are important to health to the everyday person through her articles and to highlight the key health issues that affect you.

'I don't have time to/for exercise'

A common phrase we are familiar with hearing.

Let's be creative and design a fitness plan for ourself.

1. Find your purpose

Your purpose in health needs no introduction. The many benefits that arise from regular exercise includes improvement to the physical, mental and social well-being.

At any age, it is important to have the mindset of self-care. Self-care is important to bring about the best in you.

By working on yourself through regular exercise, you are cultivating a stronger mindset of self-improvement which leads to improved self-esteem.

There's a saying of:

'If you don't know what to pursue in life right now, pursue **yourself**.

Pursue being the **healthiest, happiest**, most **healed**, most **present**, most **confident** version of yourself.

Then the **right path** will reveal itself.'

2. Education

Be educated on the recommendations for exercise to reap the health benefits.¹

Have a balanced fitness routine.

Get at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity a week. Or get at least 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity a week. Aim to exercise most days of the week.

For even more health benefits, get 300 minutes a week or more of moderate aerobic activity. Exercising this much may help with weight loss or keeping off lost weight.

Do strength training exercises for all major muscle groups at least two times a week. Use a weight or resistance level heavy enough to tire muscles after about 12 to 15 repetitions, 3-5 cycles.

Flexibility and balance train at least 2-3 days a week.

Build activity into your daily routine. Finding time to exercise can be a challenge.

To make it easier, schedule time to exercise as you would any other appointment.

Maximising time for movement wherever you are.

If your work is deskbound, consider having a resistance band or weights at your desk to workout. A resistance band is light in weight and easy to pack in your work bag or travel bag. Fitness workouts can be found on the internet to keep yourself educated and motivated.

¹ chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://ch-api.healthhub.sg/api/public/content/a0254274ebdd40ab95c7c630a59acc31?v=dab36f97

Incorporate more steps in your daily commute. Take the bus or train instead of driving, alight further from the train or bus stop of your destination, take the further train cabin from the station exit.

Research published on 16 Oct 2023 showed that climbing just 50 stairs a day (equivalent to 5 flights of stairs) can help reduce heart disease risk by about 20%.²

2. Preparation

(a) Research published in the 'Journal of Experimental Social Psychology' in 2012 coined the term '**enclothed cognition**' which demonstrates how clothes systematically influence wearers' psychological processes.³

It shows that the colour, pattern, fabric, style, and fit of your workout clothes can all enhance your performance, and even motivate you to show up more consistently.

Enclothed cognition involves the co-occurrence of two independent factors—the symbolic meaning of the clothes *and* the physical experience of wearing them.⁴

This is akin to a doctor wearing a white coat, a chef wearing an apron and other professions that has an identity associated with a certain type and appearance of clothing.

Make planning your fitness outfit something to look forward towards your next workout. Have fun in your fitness journey!

(b) Pre-pack your fitness outfit

Leave a set of exercise clothes and shoes in the office, car or pack your fitness bag the night before next to your work bag.

² https://www.health.com/climbing-stairs-daily-heart-disease-risk-8357393?hid=e2b82dd34c6b44f478d7ca50b7b03de233a97fe0&did=11980572-20240222&utm_campaign=healthy-living_newsletter&utm_source=hth&utm_medium=email&utm_content=022224&lctg=e2b82dd34c6b44f478d7ca50b7b03de233a97fe0

³ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/fitness/art-20048269>

⁴ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0022103112000200>

3. Tracking progress

Keep a record of your health parameters regularly. This can include monitoring of daily steps, duration of movement activities. Keeping a consistent record will allow for accountability and actionable items to make improvements when the motivation starts to wane.

Allow no more than 2 days of rest from fitness if there's no medical reasons not to be exercising.

4. Be kind to yourself

Look after your mental health. Refrain from negative thoughts and feelings should you not succeed in maintaining a consistent track record in your fitness journey. Understand that you are allowed to make a come-back at any time with a better understanding of the areas you did not do as well.

5. Surround yourself in a conducive healthy living environment

Be mindful of the physical and digital environments you surround yourself in. Spend more time engaging with health seeking behaviour activities and communities to inspire and motivate your fitness journey.

6. Engage with your doctor and health professionals regularly

Schedule regular health checks with your doctor, health coach and other health professionals.

Food for thought:

Be thankful for a day to make a difference to your health while you are healthy and safe.

Never take for granted your health when healthy.

Make improvements if you are not.

Develop a healthy relationship with exercise. It is the best thing you can do for yourself.

Do something today that your future self will thank you for.

The best day to start exercising is today.

Final Thoughts:

The next time you have your health screening done, spare a moment to reflect on your lifestyle habits and discuss with your doctor on ways to improve the above towards a better and healthier you and our planet.

‘Towards better health outcomes’

About the author:

Dr Chrystal Fong Chern Ying (MBBS Melbourne, FRACGP) is currently practicing as a family physician at Asia HealthPartners under the subsidiary of Singapore Institute of Advanced Medicine (SAM) Holdings, located at Lucky Plaza, Orchard, Singapore.

Dr Chrystal Fong is listed on the editors list of health screening providers on Health365, a healthcare, wellness and aesthetic medicine publishing agency in Asia. She has a special interest in health prevention and incorporates sports psychology and lifestyle medicine principles in her health screening and advocacy in health promotion.

She will be featured in the Britishpedia’s upcoming 6- edition of 'Successful People in Malaysia and Singapore'.

She is an active sports person who has keen interests in lifestyle medicine, medical technology and longevity themed medical care. She takes personal pride in living the lifestyle medicine pillars herself and advocating through her sports communities and social media platforms.

Her personal mantra being 'The world is changed by your example, not your opinion.'

Being certified in Wellness and Behaviour modification with International Sports Academy, her consultations incorporate health coaching methods.

She is a member of the Singapore College of Family Physicians, Singapore Medical Association, Singapore Society of Behavioral Health, Singaporean Society of Lifestyle Medicine, HIMSS (Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society).



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