

HealthierUS Veterans



Your Guide to Getting Started

How to:

Eat Healthy

Be Active

Get Fit for Life

Thanks to the VA Palo Alto Health Care System HealthierUS Veterans Committee for their work in developing the format and content areas for this guide.

**The contents of this guide were adapted from «A Healthier You» book, published by the Department of Health and Human Services, 2005
and
MOVE! Weight Management Program for Veterans patient materials.**

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Introduction

HealthierUS Veterans is a joint initiative between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The focus of the initiative is to educate veterans, their families, and communities about the prevention and health risks of obesity and diabetes.

This Guide was developed for you to use in your journey to healthy living. It is an introduction to healthy eating, food shopping and exercise. The guide contains information on nutrition, the benefits of regular physical activity and how to get started exercising for all levels of physical ability. A list of online resources is also included.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and healthy weight are essential elements for achieving overall health. People who are overweight or obese have an increased risk for health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, heart disease, trouble breathing during sleep, joint pain and some types of cancer.

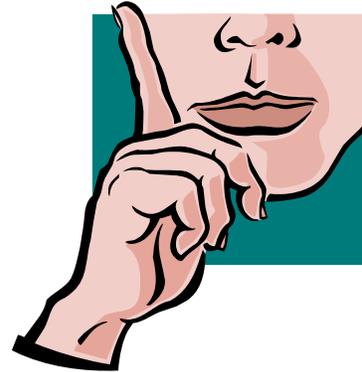
This booklet is based on the VA's *MOVE!* Weight Management Program for Veterans. For additional information, visit the *MOVE!* website at <http://www.move.va.gov>.

To learn more about HealthierUS Veterans, please visit the HealthierUS Veterans website at <http://www.healthierusveterans.va.gov>.

Change Your Thinking about Food, Exercise, and Yourself

MOVE! Handout S10

www.move.va.gov



**What you think drives what you do.
You can change your thinking. Here are
some tips:**

- Make a firm decision to get serious.
- Make your weight management program one of your top priorities.
- Realize that you have control over your weight.
- Eating and other lifestyle behaviors have been learned; therefore, they can be replaced or changed.
- Think positively!
- Tell yourself you're worth the effort!
- Think about exercise and physical fitness as increasing your energy, vitality and well-being.
- Think of eating and physical activity as needing a balance. You have the power to tip the scales.

Think about weight management as a life-long effort and a way to be good to yourself.

How Do I Start Changing My Eating Habits?

MOVE! Handout S04

www.move.va.gov



- Set short-term goals and write them down.
- Make one or two changes at a time and start with something easy.
- Tell yourself to eat until you are satisfied, not until you are stuffed.
- Take your time, eat slowly, and enjoy your food.
- Keep a food record to help you see where changes can be made.
- Consider some of the following to get started:
 - Eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low fat dairy products. These are good for you and help to fill you up.
 - Drink a glass of water before eating.
 - Drink water, diet sodas or artificially sweetened drinks instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.
 - Get rid of snack foods high in calories, fat, and sugar. If you don't have these foods available, you won't be as tempted.
 - Have healthy snacks easily available.
 - Broil, bake, steam or grill your food instead of frying it.
 - Choose lean cuts of meat; cut off visible fat.
 - Plan snacks and meals ahead of time.
 - Avoid alcohol.

Making Healthy Food Choices

MOVE! Handout S06
www.move.va.gov

Living a healthier lifestyle does not mean that you have to skip meals, run a marathon, or give up your favorite foods. Healthy living means lifestyle changes. You can make small changes, and these changes can become habits!

Healthy living includes being physically active, eating more whole-grain foods, fruits and vegetables, eating fewer salty, fatty or fried foods, and using less salt.

Focus on fruits

- Eat a variety of fruit everyday.
- Fruit can be fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.
- Too much fruit juice can add lots of unnecessary sugar to your diet. Limit fruit juice to one serving per day.
- One serving of fruit equals 1 medium piece of fruit; $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup cut fruit, $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup dried fruit, or $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup 100% juice.



Vary your veggies

- Eat more dark green veggies, such as broccoli and kale.
- Eat more orange veggies, such as carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and winter squash.
- Eat more beans and peas, such as pinto beans, kidney beans, black beans, garbanzo beans, split peas, and lentils.
- One serving of veggies equals 1 cup raw leafy greens; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped, cooked or raw vegetables; or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup 100% juice.

Get calcium-rich foods

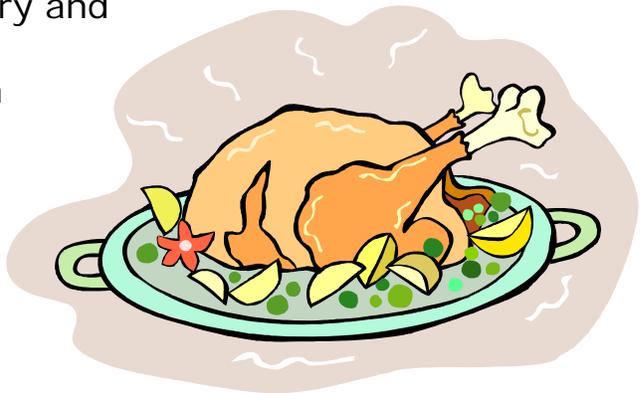
- Every day, get 3 cups of lowfat or fat-free milk or an equivalent amount of low-fat yogurt
- (1 cup yogurt) and/or low-fat cheese
- (1 ½ ounces of cheese equals 1 cup of milk).
- If you don't or can't drink milk, choose lactose-free milk products and/or calcium-fortified foods and beverages.

Make at least half your grains whole grains

- Eat at least 3 ounces of whole grains everyday.
- One ounce is 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of breakfast cereal, or ½ cup of cooked rice or pasta.
- Look to see that grains such as wheat, rice, oats, or corn are referred to as whole in the list of ingredients.

Go lean with protein

- Choose lean meats and poultry.
- Bake, broil or grill meat, poultry and fish.
- Vary your protein choices with fish, beans, peas, nuts, and seeds.
- One serving of meat, poultry or seafood is 2-3 ounces, about the size of a deck of cards.
- For beans or peas, ½ cup is a serving, and for nuts and seeds, ¼ cup is a serving.



Know the limits on fats, salt, sugars, and alcohol

- Read the Nutrition Facts label on foods.
- Look for foods low in saturated fats and Trans fats.
- Choose and prepare foods and beverages with little salt (sodium) and/or added sugars (caloric sweeteners like sucrose or high fructose corn-syrup).
- Limit alcohol. It just adds empty calories.
- All foods can be enjoyed in moderation once you know the limits.

Tips for Healthy Substitutes

These are some lower-fat and lower-calorie options for meals and recipes.

If you usually use	Try this instead
Milk, Milk Products and Dairy Products	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Whole milk <input type="checkbox"/> Cream <input type="checkbox"/> Ice cream <input type="checkbox"/> Whipping cream <input type="checkbox"/> Sour cream <input type="checkbox"/> Cream cheese <input type="checkbox"/> Cheese - Cheddar, Swiss, Jack, American <input type="checkbox"/> Regular (4%) cottage cheese <input type="checkbox"/> Whole milk mozzarella cheese <input type="checkbox"/> Whole milk ricotta cheese <input type="checkbox"/> Eggs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fat-free (skim), low fat (1%) or reduced fat (2%) milk <input type="checkbox"/> Evaporated fat-free (skim) milk, fat free half and half <input type="checkbox"/> Sorbet and ices, sherbet, and low fat or fat free frozen yogurt <input type="checkbox"/> Whip evaporated skim milk, low fat or fat free whipped topping <input type="checkbox"/> Fat free sour cream, plain low fat yogurt <input type="checkbox"/> Light cream cheese or fat free cream cheese <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced calorie cheese, low calorie processed cheeses or fat free cheese <input type="checkbox"/> Low fat (1%) or reduced fat (2%) cottage cheese <input type="checkbox"/> Part skim milk, low moisture mozzarella cheese <input type="checkbox"/> Part skim milk ricotta cheese <input type="checkbox"/> For 1 whole egg – use 2 egg whites or egg substitute or 1 egg white and 2 teaspoons of oil <input type="checkbox"/> For 1 egg yolk – use 1 egg white
Meat, Fish and Poultry	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cold cuts or lunch meats (bologna, salami, liverwurst, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Hot dogs (regular) <input type="checkbox"/> Bacon or sausage <input type="checkbox"/> Regular ground beef <input type="checkbox"/> Chicken or turkey with skin or duck <input type="checkbox"/> Oil-packed tuna <input type="checkbox"/> Beef (chuck, rib, or brisket) <input type="checkbox"/> Pork (spareribs or untrimmed loin) <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen breaded fish or fried fish (homemade or commercial) <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen TV dinners (containing more than 13 grams of fat per serving) <input type="checkbox"/> Chorizo sausage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Low fat cold cuts (95% to 97% fat free lunch meats, skinless turkey, chicken or ham or low fat pressed meats) <input type="checkbox"/> Lower fat or fat free hot dogs <input type="checkbox"/> Canadian bacon, low fat turkey bacon, lean ham, or veggie sausage <input type="checkbox"/> Extra lean ground beef or ground turkey with 10% or less “fat by weight” <input type="checkbox"/> Chicken or turkey without skin (white meat) <input type="checkbox"/> Water packed tuna (rinse to reduce sodium content) <input type="checkbox"/> Leaner cuts of meat labeled as “select” grade; round, sirloin, top loin <input type="checkbox"/> Pork tenderloin or trimmed, lean smoked ham <input type="checkbox"/> Fish or shellfish, unbreaded (fresh, frozen, or canned in water) <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen TV dinners (containing less than 13 grams of fat per serving and lower in sodium) <input type="checkbox"/> Turkey or chicken sausage, drained well (read label) <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian sausage (made with tofu)

Cereal, Grains and Pasta	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ramen noodles <input type="checkbox"/> Pasta with white or cheese sauce <input type="checkbox"/> Granola <input type="checkbox"/> White rice	<input type="checkbox"/> Rice or noodles (spaghetti, macaroni, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Pasta with red sauce (marinara) <input type="checkbox"/> Pasta with vegetables (primavera) <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced fat granola <input type="checkbox"/> Bran flakes, crispy rice, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Cooked grits or oatmeal <input type="checkbox"/> Brown rice
Baked Goods	
<input type="checkbox"/> Croissants, brioches, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Donuts, sweet rolls, muffins, scones or pastries <input type="checkbox"/> Party crackers <input type="checkbox"/> Cake (pound, chocolate or yellow) <input type="checkbox"/> Cookies	<input type="checkbox"/> Hard French rolls or soft brown 'n serve rolls <input type="checkbox"/> English muffins, bagels, reduced fat or fat free muffins or scones <input type="checkbox"/> Low fat crackers (choose lower in sodium) <input type="checkbox"/> Saltine or soda crackers (choose lower in sodium) <input type="checkbox"/> Cake – angel food, white or gingerbread <input type="checkbox"/> Fat-free or reduced fat cookies (graham crackers, ginger snaps, or fig bars)
Snacks and Sweets	
<input type="checkbox"/> Nuts <input type="checkbox"/> Ice cream, for example, cones or bars <input type="checkbox"/> Custards or puddings (made with whole milk)	<input type="checkbox"/> Popcorn (air-popped or light microwave), fruits, vegetables <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen yogurt, fruit, or chocolate pudding bars <input type="checkbox"/> Puddings (made with fat free milk)
Fats, Oils, and Salad Dressings	
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular margarine or butter <input type="checkbox"/> Regular mayonnaise <input type="checkbox"/> Regular salad dressings <input type="checkbox"/> Butter or margarine on toast or bread	<input type="checkbox"/> Light spread margarines, diet margarine, or whipped butter, tub or squeeze bottle <input type="checkbox"/> Low fat or fat free mayonnaise, mustard or Fat free plain yogurt <input type="checkbox"/> Fat free or reduced calorie salad dressings, lemon juice, or plain, herb flavored, or wine vinegar <input type="checkbox"/> Jelly, jam or honey on bread or toast
Miscellaneous	
<input type="checkbox"/> Canned cream soups <input type="checkbox"/> Gravy (homemade with fat and/or milk) <input type="checkbox"/> Guacamole or refried beans with lard	<input type="checkbox"/> Canned broth-based soups (low-sodium) or fat free milk based soups <input type="checkbox"/> Gravy mixes made with water or homemade with the fat skimmed off and fat free milk <input type="checkbox"/> Salsa
For Baking and Cooking	
<input type="checkbox"/> Oils, shortening or lard <input type="checkbox"/> Frosting/icing	<input type="checkbox"/> Stir-frying or sautéing use non stick cooking spray <input type="checkbox"/> Baking: substitute applesauce, prune purée or double the amount of plain yogurt <input type="checkbox"/> Meringue, low fat or fat free whipped topping, sifted confectioner's sugar, sifted cocoa powder, fruit or jam

* Adapted from A Healthier You, Department of Health and Human Services and *MOVE!* Weight Management Program for Veterans

Smart Shopping

Some food choices are better than others. Here are some smart-shopping tips.



Produce Section

- Choose a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables.
- Peppers, tomatoes, broccoli, cabbage, potatoes, greens, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, and strawberries are all rich in vitamin C.
- Fruits and vegetables that are deep-colored green, yellow, or orange throughout are high in vitamin A.

Deli Counter

- Sliced roast beef, turkey and lean ham are good low fat choices.
- Select processed lunch meats marked 95% fat free.
- Pressed meats, lean ham and Canadian bacon are low fat but high in sodium.
- Check nutrition label for sodium and fat content of turkey and chicken franks.

Dairy Case

- Choose part-skim mozzarella or string cheese; part-skim ricotta; and "light" and reduced-calories cheeses that contain less than 5 grams of fat per ounce. Select milk, buttermilk, cottage cheese and yogurt that are low fat and have less than 200 calories per serving.
- A little sharp cheese has more flavor and less fat than a larger amount of milder cheese.

Bread and Cereal Shelves

- Look for the words "whole wheat" or "whole grain" at the beginning of the ingredient listing.
- Look for cereal with at least 2 grams of fiber, 8 grams or less sugar and 2 grams or less fat per serving.

Pasta and Rice

- Choose long grain and brown rice and whole wheat pasta. Check the nutrition label to check that it has at least 2 grams of fiber per serving.
- Rice and pasta mixes are usually high in sodium; use only one-half the provided seasoning packet.

Beverages

- Choose 100% pure fruit juices instead of fruit "drinks" or "punches".
- Choose calorie free flavored waters instead of beverages that have a high sugar content.

Canned Food Aisles

- Canned beans, peas, corn and vegetables are quick and easy sources of vitamins, minerals and fiber.
- Choose "no added salt" versions of canned vegetables.

Snacks and Crackers

- Choose thick, unsalted pretzels ; they are lower in fat and sodium.
- Graham crackers, animal crackers, gingersnaps and fig bars are healthier choices.
- Make your own in an air popper or with a limited amount of oil. Use butter-flavored substitute or cooking spray for flavoring.
- Limit products with palm, palm kernel or coconut oil high on their ingredient lists.

Fat, Oil, Condiments and Dressing Selections

- Minimize the use of regular butter and avoid margarines that contain trans-fats. These can be identified by the words “partially hydrogenated” on the ingredient label. Choose buttery spreads or sprays labeled as “trans-fat free”. These are made from unsaturated vegetable oils like canola or safflower oils. You might also try spreads made from low-fat yogurt blends.
- To cut fat, use diet dressings with less than 10 calories per tablespoon on salad and as a marinade for meat, poultry or vegetables.
- Salad dressings, olives, pickles and marinades can be high in sodium.
- Some “light” oils are light only in color and flavor, not in fat or calories. “Light” mayonnaise has about half the calories of regular..
- Ketchup and barbeque sauces can have plenty of added sugar.

Meat, Poultry and Fish Section

- Select lean, well-trimmed cuts: flank steak, round steak or roasts, sirloin or tenderloin, loin pork chops or lean ground beef.
- Meat graded “Select” has less fat than “Choice” or “Prime” grades.
- Limit high-fat meats: ribs, corned beef, sausage, bacon and beef liver.
- Half of chicken’s calories are in the skin. Buy skinless parts or remove skin of cooked poultry before eating.
- Fish from deep waters have heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids: salmon, tuna, mackerel, sea trout, bluefish or herring.
- Most chicken and turkey nuggets, patties and rolls are made with ground skin and have a lot of salt.

Frozen Food Cases

- Select frozen juice and fruit bars with no added sugar or cream.
- Choose portion-packed frozen desserts.
- Ice milk and low fat frozen yogurt have less fat than ice cream.
- Plain, frozen vegetables have less fat and salt than those in sauces.
- Select frozen fish and poultry without breading to limit fat and sodium.
- Select frozen dinners with less than 15 grams of fat, 400 calories and 800 milligrams of sodium.

Sample Menu

Breakfast

1 cup oatmeal
1 banana
1 cup skim milk
1 slice whole wheat toast
1 tsp. low fat margarine

Lunch

2 slices whole grain bread
1 slice turkey
1 cup salad (mixture of raw vegetables)
1 Tbsp. fat free or light Italian dressing
10 grapes

Snack

1 peach
1 cup sugar free, low fat yogurt

Dinner

3 oz roasted chicken (size of deck of cards)
1/2 cup green beans seasoned with basil
1 baked potato (including the skin which has fiber!)
1 Tbsp. fat free sour cream
1 cup canned light fruit (in own juices)
1 whole wheat roll
1/2 cup sugar free, low fat ice cream

Night Snack

3 cups light, low salt (low sodium) popcorn
Be sure to read nutrition labels. Note the serving size first.

- Look for calories, fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, & sodium content.

My Shopping List *

Plan ahead – plan your meals for the week. Make a shopping list and stick to the list. Include the items you need for your menus and any low-calorie basics you need to restock in your kitchen.

Produce Section

Vegetables

- Broccoli
- Corn
- Cauliflower
- Squash
- Green beans
- Lettuce
- Cucumber
- Asparagus
- Carrots or celery
- Onions
- Potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Green peppers
- _____

Fruit

- Apples
- Bananas
- Oranges
- Lemons
- Limes
- Peaches
- Pears
- Grapes
- Grapefruit
- Apricots
- Cherries
- Plums
- Melons
- _____

Breads, Muffins, and Rolls

- Bread, bagels, or pita bread
- English muffins
- Yeast breads (whole wheat, rye, pumpernickel or multi-grain)
- Corn tortillas (not fried)
- Low-fat flour tortillas
- Rice crackers
- _____

* Adapted from A Healthier You, Department of Health and Human Services



Dairy Case

- Fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk
- Low-fat or reduced fat cottage cheese
- Fat-free cottage cheese
- Low-fat or reduced fat cheeses
- Fat-free or low-fat yogurt
- Light or diet margarine (tub, squeeze, or spray)
- Fat-free or reduced fat sour cream
- Fat-free cream cheese
- Eggs/egg substitute
- Soft (tub) margarine
- Mayonnaise, low-fat
- _____

Cereals

- Plain cereal, dry or cooked
- Hominy grits
- Oatmeal
- _____

Canned Foods

Canned Vegetables (low-sodium or no-salt-added)

- Canned tomatoes
- Tomato sauce or pasta
- Other canned vegetables
- Canned vegetable soup, (reduced sodium)
- Canned Fruit (in juice or water)
- Canned pineapple
- Applesauce
- Beans and dried peas (no salt-added)
- Lentils
- Black beans
- Red beans (kidney beans)
- Navy beans
- Black-eyed peas
- Great white northern beans
- Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- _____

Snacks and Crackers

- Saltines, soda crackers (low-sodium or unsalted tops)
- Graham crackers
- Other low-fat crackers
- Dried Fruit - Raisins / dried fruit
- Nuts and Seeds
- Almonds, unsalted
- Mixed nuts, unsalted
- Peanuts, unsalted
- Pumpkin seeds, unsalted
- Sunflower seeds, unsalted
- Cashews, unsalted
- Pecans, unsalted
- _____

Rice, Noodles, Pasta

- Rice (brown, white, etc.)
- Pasta (noodles, spaghetti)
- Bulgur, couscous, or kasha
- Potato mixes (made without fat)
- Wheat mixes
- Polenta
- _____

Fat, Oil, Condiments, Dressings

- Fat-free or low-fat salad dressings
- Mustard
- Catsup
- Barbecue sauce
- Jam, jelly, or honey
- _____

Spices

- Flavored vinegars
- Salsa or picante sauce
- Canned green chilies
- Soy sauce (low-sodium)
- Bouillon cubes/granules (low-sodium)
- _____

Beverages

- No-calorie drink mixes
- Reduced calorie juices
- Unsweetened iced tea
- Carbonated water
- Water
- _____

Meat / Poultry / Fish

- White meat chicken and turkey (skin off)
- Fish (not battered)
- Beef, round or sirloin
- Extra lean ground beef
- Pork tenderloin
- 95% fat-free lunch low-fat deli meats
- Fish fillets—unbreaded
- _____

Frozen Foods

Frozen Vegetables - (without added fats like cream sauces)

- Broccoli
- Spinach
- Mixed medley, etc.
- Vegetables (plain)
- Egg substitute
- _____

Frozen Fruits – (without added sugar)

- Blueberries
- Raspberries
- 100 percent fruit juices (no sugar added)
- Fruits (no sugar added)
- _____

Baking Items

- Flour
- Sugar
- Imitation butter (flakes or buds)
- Non-stick cooking spray
- Canned evaporated milk— fat-free (skim) or reduced fat (2%)
- Non-fat dry milk powder
- Cocoa powder, unsweetened
- Baking powder
- Baking soda
- Cornstarch
- Unflavored gelatin
- Gelatin, any flavor (reduced calorie)
- Pudding mixes (reduced calorie)
- Angel food cake mix
- Canola oil
- Corn oil
- Olive oil
- Safflower oil
- _____

Benefits of Regular Physical Activity

MOVE! Handout P02
www.move.va.gov



- Gives you more energy
- Helps you sleep better
- Improves your heart and lungs
- Decreases blood pressure
- Reduces body fat and weight gain
- May decrease bad (LDL) cholesterol and raise good (HDL) cholesterol
- Controls/prevents diabetes
- Strengthens bones and helps prevent injury
- Increases muscular strength and endurance
- Increases flexibility and range of motion
- Improves your mood
- Helps with stress and depression
- Improves self-esteem
- Makes you feel better

How Do I Get Started With Increasing My Physical Activity

MOVE! Handout S05
www.move.va.gov

Increasing your physical activity levels does not mean you have to join the local gym or athletic club. There are many fun ways to increase activity slowly and safely. The best thing about physical activity is that even a little can make you feel a whole lot better. In no time at all, you will have more energy, sleep better and feel fitter.

Safety First:

- ✓ Check with your primary care provider before beginning a program of physical activity.

- ✓ Stop exercising immediately if you experience any of the following:
 - Severe pain, tightness, pressure, or discomfort in your chest
 - Severe shortness of breath
 - Severe nausea or vomiting
 - Sudden onset weakness or changes in sensation in your arm and/or leg on one side of your body
 - Difficulty swallowing, talking, or seeing
 - Severe headache or dizziness

CALL 911 immediately if the symptoms do not disappear within a few minutes.

If you have less severe, new, or worsening symptoms when beginning or increasing physical activity, see your primary care provider.

General tips on increasing physical activity:

- Start slowly; choose the type and amount of activity that is right for you.
- Increase your everyday activity. Take the stairs. Park farther away and walk. Clean your house. Get up to change the TV channel. Walk to check your mail.
- Walking is a great way to increase your physical activity. It's free and you can do it almost anywhere.
- Use a pedometer to count the number of steps you take everyday.
- You don't have to belong to a gym. Choose any activity that gets you moving.
- For weight loss, exercising longer is better than exercising harder. Mild to moderate exercise will do the job.
- Aim to be physically active for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. Even longer would be better, but try not to overdo it at first.
- Wear comfortable shoes and clothes that are right for the activity and weather.
- Listen to your body. You are the best judge of how hard and how long you should exercise.
- Recruit an activity buddy; someone who likes the same activity and can keep you motivated.
- Warm-up, cool-down, and stretch before, during and after activity to prevent injury and reduce muscle soreness.
- Whether it is summer or winter, drink plenty of water before, during, and after activity.

Exercise Can Be Fun!

MOVE! Handout P06
www.move.va.gov

So you don't like physical activity? There are lots of ways to be physically active without doing what you might consider a workout or exercise.

- Go walking with others.
- Dance.
- Get the whole family involved in some physical activity like walking in a park.
- Find a beginner's exercise class that you might enjoy.
- Do housework to music.
- Try out a new sport or activity.
- Go bicycling with family or friends.
- Check out your local community center for upcoming events.
- Carry your clubs or use a pull cart to burn more calories when you play golf.



F.I.T.T - Frequency, Intensity, Time and Type of Activity



MOVE! Handout S07

www.move.va.gov

When you put all that effort into increasing physical activity you want results. By following the FITT idea you can be sure that you are working towards managing your weight and improving your health.

Frequency How often you are active	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase frequency slowly.• Build to being active 5 or more days of the week.
Intensity How hard your heart and muscles are working during activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be active at a moderate intensity similar to a brisk walk.• Be active at a rate that allows for talking.• Slow down if you have trouble breathing or feel you can't catch your breath.
Time How long you are active	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to stay active for at least 10 minutes without stopping.• Aim for at least 30 minutes of activity throughout the day.• Set a goal for the week based on total minutes of physical activity.• Increase the length of time you are active before increasing the intensity of the activity.
Type of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unless you have been instructed otherwise, do aerobic activities (these make your heart beat faster walk briskly, bike, swim or dance).• Use large muscle groups (such as legs and arms).• Always warm-up, cool-down and stretch.• Try to also include strength and flexibility activities.

Types of Activities

Aerobic activities are important for your health.

Aerobic activities include walking briskly, biking, swimming or dancing. Or you can play with your children or your grandchildren, housework or garden.



Aerobic activities cause your heart and lungs to work harder for a period of time. Do these unless your doctor has told you otherwise. As your stamina improves, you can increase the frequency and time spent doing the activity. The next step is to increase the intensity.

- If you are not active, start slowly. Although the goal is at least 30-minutes of activity most days of the week, you can split that into several parts. For example, you can take three 10-minute walks during the day. Gradually increase how often you exercise and the amount of time.
- Find an activity that you enjoy.
- Try to alternate the types of activities you do. Walk one day and go dancing the next.
- Invite a friend or your spouse to join you.
- If exercising outdoors, be careful if it is very warm or very cold.

Activities that improve your **strength and balance** are also important and will benefit your health. These activities help build strong muscles and bones and may prevent falls.

Strength and exercises for all major muscle groups week should be done 2-3



days a week. Do not do **strength** exercises on the same muscle groups (e.g., arms, legs, trunk) two days in a row. Muscles need at least a day to recover from strength activities. This will help to avoid injury and soreness. Be sure to warm-up-, cool-down, and stretch whenever you are active.

Every day activities can also build strength and muscle mass. These activities include: digging in a garden, chopping wood, using a push lawn mower, bicep curls, leg lifts, squats and some types of yoga.

For more information on specific strength activities see *MOVE!* Handout P32 «Sample Strength Activity Plan for Beginners» at www.move.va.gov.

Stretching activities help increase your flexibility. They can also make everyday activities like bending to tie your shoes easier. **Stretching** exercises can also help as you recover from an injury. They may even prevent an injury from happening.

- Stretch in both directions. If you **stretch** to the left don't forget to stretch to the right.
- **Stretch** slowly and smoothly.
- **Stretch** to a point where you place mild, but not painful stretch on the muscles. When you repeat the stretch, you should be able to go a little further without pain.
- Hold each stretch for 10-30 seconds. Repeat each **stretch** 3-5 times. Breathe slowly in and out without holding your breath.
- If a **stretch** causes too much pain, stop doing it, or do it more gently. Listen to your body!



Walking

MOVE! Handout P15

www.move.va.gov

Walking is a great way to be more physically active. It's free, fun, and you can do it almost anywhere.



Here are 6 reasons to get up and walk:

1. Regular walking burns calories, which in addition to a healthy diet can help you to manage your weight.
2. More than half the body's muscles are designed for walking; it is a natural movement that is almost injury-free.
3. Regular brisk walking has many health benefits.
4. Brisk walking is an aerobic activity. It makes your heart, lungs, and muscles stronger.
5. Walking refreshes the mind, reduces fatigue, increases energy, and improves sleep.
6. Walking can be a great time for sharing and socializing with friends and family.

Getting started:

- A little walking everyday is better than an occasional weekend bout of activity. Start with short walks and build from there.
- Choose routes that are interesting, safe and convenient. Avoid heavy traffic, loose dogs, and rough ground. Remember hills are more difficult.
- Walking with others can help motivate you.
- Be safe. Take a friend when it is dark outside. Tell someone where you are going, and bring a cell phone if you can.
- When it is very hot, walk during the coolest hours, choose a shady route, and walk a little slower.
- When it is cold, avoid icy surfaces.
- Dress in loose, comfortable clothing. In cold weather, dress in layers and wear mittens and a hat.
- Wear comfortable, appropriate shoes.
- Consider using a pedometer to measure the number of steps you walk.
- Warm-up before and cool-down after activity.

Sample 10-week walking plans to get you started:

This plan is for those who are not used to physical activity

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Minutes walking	10	10	15	18	20	20	25	30	32	35
Walks per week	2	3	3	3	3-4	4	4	4	4	4

This plan is for those who are already physically active.

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Minutes walking	20	22	25	30	30	35	35	40	42	45
Walks per week	3	3	3	3	4	4	4-5	4-5	4-5	4-5

Indoor Physical Activities

MOVE! Handout P05

www.move.va.gov



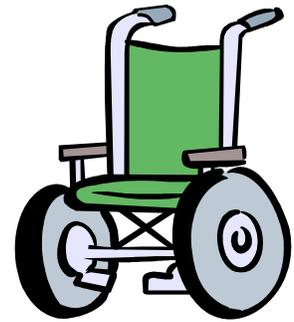
If the weather is bad or you prefer the indoors, there are still lots of physical activities you can do.

- Put on some music and dance.
- Do strength exercises at home using items such as water bottles and canned foods as dumbbells.
- Walk around the mall (most open early for walkers).
- Do chair stretches.
- Exercise to a TV program.
- Borrow an exercise video from the library or a friend (examples include chair dancing, step walking, beginner aerobics).
- Go to a gym or recreation center (join the YMCA).
- Get involved with fitness activities at a local community center or senior center.
- Too hot outside ... take a swim at an indoor pool.
- Take a water aerobics class.
- Look for sales or visit second hand stores for used exercise equipment.
- Do indoor activities such as racquetball, tennis, roller-skating, bowling, etc. at a sports center/gym.

Ask your health care provider for more information on stretch and flexibility activities as well as strength exercises.

Increasing Physical Activity for Veterans with Physical or Medical Limitations

MOVE! Handout P22
www.move.va.gov



Do I need to see my healthcare provider before beginning a program of physical activity?

Many veterans can begin a program of mild or moderate activity safely without having a check-up from their primary care provider. Your *MOVE!* healthcare team can tell you whether or not you should have a check-up before starting. In general, the following veterans should always see their provider before starting.

- Veterans with heart and/or lung conditions
- Veterans planning a program of “vigorous” activity

What is the difference between mild, moderate, and vigorous levels of activity?

- Mild activities should feel like slow walking. They should not cause much of a sweat or cause you to have trouble catching your breath.
- Moderate activities are like fast walking. These activities will make your heart beat a little bit faster. This may cause light sweating but should never cause you to be out of breath or exhausted.
- Vigorous activities such as running will cause the heart to beat very fast. With these activities, you will sweat heavily and have some difficulty breathing.

Are there certain activities I should avoid?

Regardless of your limitations, very few activities are “off-limits”. The *MOVE!* handout “Activity Limitations for certain Medical Conditions” has more explanation and is on the next few pages.

Will I make my condition worse by exercising?

Physical activity almost always helps improve medical conditions. It is wise to avoid or reduce physical activity during times when your condition worsens.

Will my medicines affect my ability to be physically active?

Physical activity is compatible with all medications. However, some medications require a close watch. Refer to the *MOVE!* handout, P27 "Physical Activity and Medications".

What if I'm in too much pain to be physically active?

Regular physical activity often improves chronic pain conditions. It can sometimes take several weeks to begin to see a benefit. See your healthcare provider to discuss options if you feel your current pain is at a level that will keep you from even getting started with physical activity.

Physical Activity Limitations for Certain Medical Conditions

MOVE! Handout P21

www.move.va.gov

Condition	Limit These Activities:	Do More of These Activities:
Arthritis of Hip or Knee	<p>Weight-bearing activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jogging • Stair climbers • High impact aerobics <p>Any high repetition, high resistance or high impact activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair exercises • Outdoor or stationary cycling • Swimming • Water aerobics/walking • Elliptical machines • Rowing machines
Osteoporosis (Brittle Bone Disease)	Activities with lots of bending forward at the waist (sit-ups or stomach crunches)	Any activity that avoids bending at the waist
Low Back Pain	High impact activities that involve running and/or jumping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair exercises • Walking • Slow jogging • Outdoor or stationary cycling • Swimming • Water aerobics/walking • Elliptical machines • Rowing machines
Lower Extremity Amputation	With proper prosthesis, no activities are limited. As you lose weight, your prosthesis may need to be refitted.	Referral to physical therapist and/or brace shop is recommended.
Stroke or Spinal Cord Injury	Limits depend on the amount of disability	Ask for a referral to a physical therapist for an activity plan
Balance Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unassisted walking • Outdoor cycling • Activities with lots of jumping or side to side motion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair exercises • Stationary cycling • Walking on treadmill with handrail • Other fitness machines with handles or grips • Referral to physical therapy for moderate to severe problems

Physical Activity Log

Keeping a log can help motivate you to be active. There are several ways to keep a log. HealthierUS Veterans encourages the use of the President’s Challenge website (see next page). Visit www.healthierusveterans.va.gov. To log activity, click on Fitness Challenges. Another way is with a paper log. You can use this log.

My goal for this week:	Aerobic Activities 30 minutes most days of the week List what you did	Strength and Balance At least 2 days a week List what you did	Stretching Activities Most days of the week List what you did
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			

- I met my activity goal this week
- I didn't meet my activity goal this week...here's what I need to do differently next week.

The President's Challenge

Keeping track or logging your activity can help you stay motivated. There are several ways you can track or log your activity. A paper log is provided in this booklet. Another way is via the President's Challenge website.

HealthierUS Veterans promotes the President's Challenge. This program is part of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. Its aim is for all Americans to be active every day. All levels and types of activities are encouraged. No matter what your activity and fitness level, the President's Challenge can help inspire you to be active and Get Fit for Life.

To participate, register and log your activities online. It's easy. There are more than 100 activities listed. You can even earn awards. You can earn the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award by being active for 30 minutes a day on at least 5 days per week, for a total of 6 weeks.

Visit www.healthierusveterans.gov and click on Fitness Challenges to register.

Online Resources:

Department of Veterans Affairs Resources HealthierUS Veterans

<http://www.healthierusveterans.va.gov>

MOVE! Weight Management Program for Veterans

<http://www.move.va.gov>

My Health_eVet

<http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

<http://www.prevention.va.gov>

Federal Government Resources

Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005

Advice about how good dietary habits can promote health and reduce risk for major chronic diseases.

<http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines/>

MyPyramid.gov

Interactive component of the USDA's new food pyramid, this site allows users to input their age, sex, and amount of daily physical activity to create a personalized food pyramid.

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

Exercise: A guide from that National Institute on Aging (NIA)

The NIA *Exercise Guide* contains valuable information about how exercise and proper nutrition are crucial for staying healthy as we age.

<http://www.niapublications.org/exercisebook/ExerciseGuideComplete.pdf>

Better Health and You: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity across Your Lifespan: Tips for Adults

Booklet on healthy eating and physical activity.

<http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/PDFs/tipsforadults804bw.pdf>

SmallStep.gov

120 small steps to make changes in eating and physical activity.

<http://www.smallstep.gov>

A Healthier You

This one-stop, easy-to-use resource will help you make wise food and physical activity choices; tips for eating out and nearly 100 easy, healthy recipes.

<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/healthieryou/contents.htm>



Prepared by:

**VA National Center for Health Promotion
and Disease Prevention
3022 Croasdaile Drive, Suite 200
Durham, NC 27705**

**Linda S. Kinsinger, MD, MPH
Director**