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The authors and publishers disclaim any liability and responsibility to any person or entity regarding this program. Instead, every user individually assumes all risk of injury, loss, or damage caused or alleged to be caused by the implementation of this program, be it direct, indirect, special, incidental or consequential.

The materials, ideas, concepts, principles and proposals contained in this program are intended to improve individual general wellness by providing good, practical information to assist healthy adult individuals in their fitness efforts.

This program makes no health claim and is not designed to help cure, heal or correct any illness, metabolic disorder or medical condition. The authors and publishers of this program are not health care professionals. They have compiled information they believed to be accurate and helpful from various sources to make suggestions and recommendations on how to design and implement a walking wellness program.

Program materials should not be construed as medical advice. It is recommended that the program be implemented under the supervision of a qualified and licensed fitness or health professional.

All individuals are encouraged to consult with their primary health care providers before making any changes to their diets, beginning an exercise program or taking supplements of any kind. All participants are urged to start slowly and gradually, to engage in safe exercise routines and practices, and to discontinue their participation in the program if they experience discomfort, distress or any sign of injury.

Consulting with a health care provider before enrolling in the program is particularly recommended for individuals over the age of 35, minors, expecting or breastfeeding mothers, and individuals with diabetes, chronic hypertension, high blood cholesterol, cardiovascular disease, or any other illness, disease, health problem, medical condition or metabolic disorder requiring special dietary needs.

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# Introduction

Shape Up is a program designed to encourage healthy, fit and active lifestyles through an increased focus on aerobic exercise, strength training and stretching. Physical activity can lead to many benefits:

* Weight maintenance
* Lower blood pressure
* Improved glucose (blood sugar) regulation
* Stronger bone density

As a participant in the Shape Up Program, you will be encouraging yourself and your co-workers to incorporate aerobic, strength training and flexibility exercises into your daily routine. This guide will provide informational and introductory guidance for each of the three exercise program components.

## Important Dates and Times

The Shape Up Program will be eight weeks long. In order to participate in the company-sponsored program, you must complete and submit your waiver by [insert waiver due date]. This waiver is located on the last page of this document. Please detach it and return it to [insert name].

## Connect on Social Media

For weekly updates and weight-loss or exercise tips, join our Shape Up discussion on [Twitter/Facebook/etc.]!

* Twitter hashtag #ShapeUp
* Facebook group: www.facebook.com/pages/[insert URL here]

## Getting Started

Exercising improves your health by reducing the amount of time you are sitting or sedentary. Sitting or remaining sedentary for extended periods can make you more susceptible to chronic disease. Increasing your exercise level is also likely to help you relax and be more energetic as you go about your day.

Don’t begin your exercise program too ambitiously. The key to success is to start slowly and increase the difficulty of your workouts as you become more fit. Those who overdo it often experience muscle soreness, become discouraged and quit. Rather than trying to run three miles on your first day, begin by running a mile and increasing your distance as your fitness level improves.

Most importantly, remember that feeling dizzy or ill is your body’s way of telling you that you are working too hard. If this happens, take a break or stop your workout for the day.

## Find the Right Pace

Exercise should be fairly comfortable for you. Your pace should be just below the point at which you start to breathe quickly. Exercising at this pace produces two desirable results: it mobilizes fat burning and helps you develop endurance. This means that for maximum fat burning, longer, slower exercise is more beneficial than short, strenuous workouts. If you are reasonably fit and exercising at the proper pace, you should burn between 400 and 600 calories per hour during any aerobic exercise. This includes riding a stationary bicycle, walking or running on a treadmill, or using a stair climber.

## Counting Calories Means Trimming the Fat

The media is full of varying reports on how to lose or maintain weight. It’s no wonder that you may be confused about what foods to eat and what to avoid. Most experts agree that eating a well-balanced diet low in fat is the key to losing weight. Since fat contains more than twice the calories of carbohydrates or protein, high-fat food equates to higher calories.

While lowering your fat intake is important, you should also monitor your overall caloric intake. Your ideal caloric intake depends on your age, body size and level of activity. Generally, women ages 23 to 50 need an average of 2,000 calories per day, while men in the same age group require about 2,400 calories per day.

For more information about healthy eating, visit [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov).

# Aerobic Exercise

Aerobic exercise is a type of physical activity that you can sustain for more than a few minutes, with the end goal being improved cardiorespiratory fitness. Commitment to a regular physical activity program is more important than the intensity of your workouts. Choose exercises you are likely to pursue and enjoy, such as these activities:

* Walking
* Running
* Biking
* Rowing
* Swimming

Read on to learn more about how you can get started on a walking program.

## Walking

If you are looking for an easy and inexpensive way to stay healthy or lose weight, you need nothing more than your own two feet. Walking is an ideal form of exercise—it’s free, and you can do it almost anytime and anywhere. Walking is also a great way to maintain a healthy weight or to shed those extra pounds.

You can walk to maintain your health or as part of a weight-loss program. To get moving, experts advise beginners to start with a 15- or 30-minute walk daily, adding five or 10 minutes to the walking session time per week. More specifically:

* To maintain your health, walk 30 minutes a day most days of the week at a “talking” pace, which means you are able to carry on a conversation comfortably while walking.
* If you are walking for weight loss, walk 45 to 60 minutes a day at a medium to fast pace. In addition, do not skip more than two days per week.
* For aerobic and cardiovascular fitness, walk 20 minutes at a very fast pace (you should be breathing hard), three to four days a week.

After walking, gentle stretching can help keep your muscles from being sore. It is also wise to warm up before walking fast or going a long distance.

## Running

Running is an energizing activity that is free and requires no equipment when done outside. Running can even fight aging, assist in weight loss, alleviate stress and reduce blood pressure. Beginning a running or exercise program can seem a bit overwhelming, but by following the steps listed below, you’ll be on your way to a successful running program with long-lasting results.

* Determine your baseline and measure your current fitness level. How long does it take you to complete one mile?
* Create a plan for your running program.
* Identify your goals. Consider your baseline and be realistic.
* Determine where running can fit into your daily routine.
* Gear up. Wearing the right type of shoes for support can help you avoid potential problems, such as shin splints.
* Create a running log to track your progress.
* Remember to stretch before and after your run to help prevent sore muscles.
* Document your success. How long does it take you to run a mile after six weeks of following your program? Re-evaluate your goals based on your results.

# Strength Training

Strength training is another component of a well-rounded exercise program. Regular resistance training can decrease the risk of heart disease by lowering body fat, decreasing blood pressure, improving cholesterol and raising your overall fitness level.

Aim to strength train your whole body at least twice every week. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) states that strength training can be accomplished with traditional free weights and dumbbells, weight machines, body weight, medicine balls, or even common household products like milk jugs filled with sand or soup cans.

For a complete workout, be sure to do eight to 10 different types of exercises. The ACSM recommends doing one to three sets of eight to 12 repetitions of each exercise for beginners or two to six sets of one to eight repetitions of each exercise for more advanced lifters. Between each set should be a rest period of two to three minutes for higher intensity exercises that use heavier loads or one to two minutes between the lower intensity exercises with light loads.

Examples of different strength training exercises you can try include:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Muscle Group** | **Free Weights** | **Machine** | **Body Weight** |
| Chest | Dumbbell bench press | Seated chest press | Pushups |
| Back | Bent-over barbell rows | Lat pulldowns | Pullups |
| Shoulders | Dumbbell lateral raise | Shoulder press | Arm circles |
| Biceps | Dumbbell bicep curls | Cable bicep curls | Reverse grip pullups |
| Triceps | Dumbbell kickbacks | Pushdowns | Tricep dips |
| Abs | Weighted crunches | Ab machine crunches | Planks |
| Quads | Back (full) squats | Leg extensions | Bodyweight lunges |
| Hamstrings | Stiff-leg deadlifts | Leg curls | Hip-ups |

As with any program, be sure to speak with your doctor prior to beginning. In addition, remember to progress slowly to avoid injury.

# Stretching

Flexibility training is important too, but it is frequently neglected, resulting in increased tightness as you age and become less active. It’s also the final step of a workout to reduce your risk of injury. Stretching is safest with sustained gradual movements lasting a minimum of 15 seconds per stretch. At a minimum, strive to stretch every day.

## Before You Stretch

Before you stretch, you should always warm up to loosen stiff muscles and help prevent injuries from stretching. Start your warmup with these movements, which all begin in a neutral position: standing straight, looking forward, feet hip-width apart and knees slightly bent. Repeat each movement six to eight times. The second part of your warmup is some movement to get your blood pumping. It can be as easy as walking briskly for two to three minutes—or even doing a few jumping jacks.

## Time to Stretch

After a quick warmup, you’re ready to stretch. Here are some simple stretches to get started with.

### Upper Back and Shoulders

* Move your arms over your head in a climbing motion. Repeat this exercise 10 times for each arm.
* Grab your right elbow with your left hand and stretch your arm across your chest. Hold this position for five seconds, then repeat the stretch with your other arm.
* Reach around your chest and grasp your left shoulder blade with your right hand and your right shoulder blade with your left hand. Give yourself a hug and hold for five to 10 seconds.
* Hug your legs with your arms while sitting, allowing your chest to rest on your legs.

### Lower Back

* Bend to one side while sitting in a chair. Hold this position for 10 seconds and then repeat the stretch on the other side.
* While standing, rotate your torso to one side, keeping your legs facing forward, and hold this position for 10 seconds. Then, do the same on the other side.
* Stand up with your hands supporting your lower back. Then, arch your back slightly backward for five seconds. Repeat three to five more times.

Stretch within your own limits. If a stretch causes you extraordinary pain, stop. Also, do not bounce while holding a stretch—this can result in torn muscles.

# Summary

Incorporating a well-rounded exercise program into your daily routine can help you live a healthier, longer life. We want our employees to be happy and healthy, which is why we’re introducing the Shape Up Program. Whether you choose to tackle the eight-week program by yourself or with your co-workers, know that you are taking the right steps to improving your overall health.

Remember to talk with your doctor before starting this program. If you both decide that a program such as this one will be good for your health, fill out the waiver on the following page and return it [insert name] by [insert due date].

# Waiver and Release

Participation in this walking program is voluntary. I elect to participate in this program at my own risk and on my own time. This activity is not work-related or mandatory.

I understand that this physical challenge and its accompanying activities may result in injuries to the participants. I believe that I am in good health and can safely participate in this program. If I am a minor, an expectant or breastfeeding mother, an individual over 35 years of age, or if I have diabetes, chronic hypertension, high blood cholesterol, cardiovascular disease, or any other illness, disease, health problem, medical condition or metabolic disorder requiring special dietary needs, I have been advised to consult with my primary health care provider for a professional opinion before enrolling in the program.

Any changes in my diet, including the use of food supplements, weight-loss or activity level, are entirely my responsibility.

I have carefully read this waiver and release, and I fully understand that it is a release of liability. I expressly agree to release and discharge and the authors of this program from any and all claims or causes of action. I agree to voluntarily give up or waive any right that I may otherwise have to bring a legal action against my employer or the authors of this program for any personal injury resulting from my participation in this program.

To the extent that a waiver and release of negligence is allowed in this state, this waiver and release is also a waiver and release of negligence. If any portion of this waiver and release is deemed to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of the waiver and release from liability shall remain in full force and in effect.

By signing this waiver and release, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the waiver and release and the disclaimer provided with this program. I also understand and acknowledge this waiver and release cannot be modified verbally.

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| --- | --- |
| Signed: |  |
| Printed Name: |  |
| Date: |  |