



## Physicians' and Health Care Providers' Toolkit

Support for the Exercise is Medicine™ Global Initiative is Provided By:



[www.ExerciseIsMedicine.org](http://www.ExerciseIsMedicine.org)

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## HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

The Exercise is Medicine™ Toolkit provides physicians and other health care providers with a simple, fast, and effective tool for using physical activity, in the right “dosage”, as a highly effective prescription for the prevention, treatment, and management of more than 40 of the most common chronic health conditions encountered in primary practice.

This toolkit acknowledges and respects that today's modern health care provider has very little time for exercise-counseling (probably no more than 20-30 seconds) during the normal office visit and empowers you to:

1. Either write an exercise prescription, depending on the health, fitness level, and physical activity preferences of your patient, or
2. Refer your patient to a certified health and fitness professional, who specializes in exercises counseling and who will oversee your patient's exercise under your supervision.

Here's how to get started:

1. Review *How to Use the Toolkit*, which you are currently reading. Once you have read this, it is highly recommended that you read through the *Exercise Prescription and Referral Process* document. This is the core of the toolkit and will explain how to either quickly write a prescription for your patient or else refer them to a certified health and fitness professional.
2. Once you are comfortable with the prescription and referral process, use the [Exercise and Readiness Prescription Pad](#) to either give your patient a physical activity prescription or to refer them to a health and fitness professional.
3. If your patient is healthy, print out and give them a [Starting an Exercise Program Patient Handout](#).
4. If your patient has a chronic health condition, look at the [Your Prescription for Health series](#) to see if your patient's condition is included in this series and, if it is, print out and give them the appropriate patient handout on how to safely exercise with their condition. This series has been reviewed by experts from the American College of Sports Medicine.

**Print out and display copies of the [Physician Office Flyer](#) in your waiting room and any other locations you deem appropriate.**



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## PRESCRIPTION & REFERRAL PROCESS

Dear Physician,

One of most important decisions your patients will make regarding their overall health is to incorporate physical activity into their lifestyle. Your encouragement may be the greatest influence on this decision.

The algorithm given below will give you guidance in monitoring your patients and helping them to exercise. It's a simple and quick, but effective, three-step process: first, you'll find out about each patient's current physical activity level; then, you'll determine if your patient is healthy enough for independent exercise; and finally, if your patient exercises less than the recommended level (as most patients do), you'll see how to quickly use the simplified Stages of Change model described below to best help your patient.

Some patients will be ready only for encouragement; some will be prepared to read the Starting an Exercise Program patient handout in this toolkit; and some will be willing to get an exercise prescription from you or a certified health fitness professional that you'll refer them to as part of the Exercise is Medicine™ program. After you've read through the description below, you'll find a template exercise prescription form (see the *Exercise Readiness and Prescription Pad* page) for use to copy and use with your patients.

1. Ask patient if they currently exercise? (See recommended guidelines<sup>1</sup>)

If YES,

Type/s of Activity \_\_\_\_\_ How Hard? \_\_\_\_\_

How Long? \_\_\_\_\_ How Often? \_\_\_\_\_

Then go to Step 2.

If NO, ask why not, and determine if the patient is willing to start a lifestyle modification program/exercise program?

If YES, go to step 2.

If NO, briefly discuss benefits of exercise with patient, provide educational handout discussing such, and encourage patient to start adding extra activity/steps to their day, as well as improving dietary choices, if need be. Schedule nurse to follow-up with patient in one week to see if patient is interested in starting lifestyle modification program/exercise program. If YES, at follow-up, go to step 2.

2. Determine if patient is healthy enough to exercise independently and what type of fitness professional you should refer patient to for exercise counseling?

If your patient is **low-risk**<sup>2</sup>, they may be cleared for **independent** exercise and you can refer the patient to a non-clinical fitness professional<sup>4</sup> such as a certified personal trainer or a health fitness specialist. If they are **not low-risk** (either because they are older or because they have more than one CAD risk factor), you should **refer** the patient to a clinical exercise professional (either an [ACSM Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist](#) or an [ACSM Clinical Exercise Specialist](#)) for a graded exercise test (GXT) to see if the patient has any underlying cardiorespiratory disease. If the GXT test shows no apparent disease, you may clear the patient for independent exercise. Apparently healthy patients who you clear for independent exercise will still benefit from exercise counseling and can be safely and effectively counseled by a non clinical fitness professional<sup>4</sup> such as a certified personal trainer or health fitness specialist.

Use your professional judgment when deciding whether a patient with a disease can be cleared to exercise independently or whether they need to exercise under the supervision of a clinical exercise professional. Patients with a disease who you clear for independent activity, just like apparently healthy patients, will still benefit from exercise counseling and can be referred to a non clinical exercise professional who is trained to work with such individuals (for example, ACSM's Health Fitness Specialist) or to a certified personal trainer. **High-risk**<sup>3</sup> patients with a disease who need supervised exercise should be referred to a clinical exercise professional such as [ACSM's Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist or Clinical Exercise Specialist](#)).

3. Determine which stage of change (precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, or action and maintenance) patient is in, and take appropriate action, as indicated in the chart below.

Stage of Change

Action

**Precontemplation**  
(Patient not ready to exercise)

Encourage patient to consider exercising;  
tell patient about **health** benefits of exercise.

	<u>Independent</u>	<u>Supervision Necessary</u>
<b>Contemplation</b> (If patient interested in or thinking about exercising)	Give handout; refer to non clinical exercise professional <sup>4,5</sup>	Refer to clinical exercise professional <sup>4,5</sup>
<b>Preparation</b> (If patient exercising less than recommended amount)	Give handout; refer to non clinical exercise professional <sup>4,5</sup>	Refer to clinical exercise professional <sup>4,5</sup>
<b>Action and Maintenance</b> (If patient is exercising recommended amount <sup>1</sup> )	Encourage continued exercise	Encourage continued supervised exercise

For more information, visit [www.exerciseismedicine.org](http://www.exerciseismedicine.org)

<sup>1</sup>30 minutes of moderately intense cardiovascular exercise a day, five days a week **or** 20 minutes of vigorously intense cardiovascular exercise a day, three days a week **and** eight to 10 strength-training exercises, eight to 12 repetitions of each exercise twice a week.

During moderate-intensity activities you should notice an increase in your heart rate, but you should still be able to talk comfortably. If you are breathing hard and fast and your heart rate is increased substantially, you are probably doing vigorous-intensity activity.

<sup>2</sup> Asymptomatic male <45 or female <55 and no more than one major CAD risk factor.

<sup>3</sup> Patient has known cardiac, pulmonary or metabolic disease or disease is revealed through a GXT test.

<sup>4</sup> It is highly recommended that you refer your patients only to fitness professionals who have been certified through an NCCA-accredited association (look at "Accredited Certification Programs" at <http://www.noca.org>) such as the American Council on Exercise (ACE), the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), the Cooper Clinic, the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM), the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA), or one of the five other accredited fitness associations (International Fitness Professionals Association, National Council on Strength and Fitness, National Exercise and Sports Trainers Association, National Exercise Trainers Association, National Federation of Professional Trainers).

<sup>5</sup> The American College of Sports Medicine is currently developing a referral process to exercise professionals.



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## EXERCISE READINESS & PRESCRIPTION PAD

This document is available for download in PDF format [here](#)

<b>EXERCISE READINESS &amp; PRESCRIPTION</b>	
Patient's name: _____ DOB: _____ Date: _____	
Physician's Signature _____	
<b>CURRENTLY EXERCISING:</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Type/s of Activity _____	
How Hard _____ (Light, moderate, intense)	
How Long _____ (Minutes/session)	
How Often _____ (Times/week)	
<b>PATIENT'S STAGE OF CHANGE</b>	
Precontemplation (Patient not ready to exercise)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contemplation (Patient interested in/beginning to exercise)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preparation (Patient's exercise inconsistent/less than optimal)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action and Maintenance (Patient exercising recommended amount)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>PHYSICIAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
Aerobic Exercise _____	
Strength Exercise _____	
Flexibility Exercise _____	
Sports Exercise _____	
Referral to Exercise/Sports Professional _____	



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## STARTING AN EXERCISE PROGRAM

This handout is available for download [here](#).

Starting an exercise program can sound like a daunting task, but just remember that your main goal is to boost your health by meeting the basic physical activity recommendations: 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity at least five days per week, or vigorous-intensity activity at least three days per week, and strength training at least twice per week.

### **Guidelines for healthy adults under age 65 with no apparent chronic disease or condition**

**STEP 1 - Set aside time each day to exercise.** Getting started can often be the most difficult part of any exercise routine. Scheduling exercise into your day and making it a priority will increase the chance of being successful.

**STEP 2 - Choose cardiovascular activities you enjoy,** such as swimming, biking, or playing basketball with friends to get your daily physical activity. If you need a variety of activities to stay motivated, combine a few that appeal to you. Physical activity can be accumulated through a variety of activities, not just running. **Walking** is a great way to do moderate-intensity physical activity. Moderate-intensity physical activity means working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat, yet still being able to carry on a conversation.

**STEP 3 - Start with 10 to 15 minutes of cardiovascular exercise daily.** Each week, add five minutes to your exercise routine **until you reach 30 minutes of moderate-intensity for a minimum of five days per week.** Alternately, you may do 20 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise three days per week. The 30-minute recommendation is for the average healthy adult to maintain health and reduce the risk for chronic disease. It should be noted that to lose weight or maintain weight loss, 60 to 90 minutes of physical activity may be necessary.

**STEP 4 - Incorporate strength training into your routine.** Do eight to 10 strength-training exercises, eight to 12 repetitions of each exercise twice a week. This can be accomplished by using dumbbells, resistance bands or your own body weight. If you are unsure how to perform the exercises correctly, seek the advice of an exercise professional.

**Guidelines for adults over age 65 (or adults 50-64 with chronic conditions, such as arthritis)\***

**STEP 1 – Begin by following the four steps listed above.** Both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity is critical for healthy aging.

**STEP 2 - If you are at risk of falling, perform balance exercises.** If you are unsure how to perform the exercises correctly, seek the advice of an exercise professional.

**STEP 3 - Have a physical activity plan.** Older adults or adults with chronic conditions should develop an activity plan with a health professional to manage risks and take therapeutic needs into account. This will maximize the benefits of physical activity and ensure your safety.

**PHYSICIANS' RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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For more information, visit [www.exerciseismedicine.org](http://www.exerciseismedicine.org).

\*If your physician has not cleared you for independent physical activity, you should exercise only under the supervision of a certified professional. The American College of Sports Medicine has two groups of certified fitness professionals that could meet your needs. The ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Specialist (CES) is certified to support those with heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. The ACSM Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RCEP) is qualified to support patients with a wide range of health challenges. You may locate all ACSM-certified fitness professionals by using the ProFinder at [www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org).



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## YOUR PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTH SERIES

Information and recommendations for exercising safely with a variety of health conditions.

This series is available for download at [www.exerciseismedicine.org/YourPrescription.htm](http://www.exerciseismedicine.org/YourPrescription.htm)

<p>Your Prescription for Health Series</p> <h3>EXERCISING WITH ARTHRITIS</h3> <p><i>An estimated 40 million people have some form of arthritis. The two most common forms are osteoarthritis, a degenerative joint disease characterized by a progressive loss of cartilage, and rheumatoid arthritis, a chronic condition causing the lining of the joints to become inflamed. Both conditions can make exercise a difficult and painful proposition. However, a well-designed physical activity program can decrease joint swelling and pain and improve overall function. Furthermore, regular exercise can help you maintain a healthy weight (which reduces pressure on your joints) and improve cartilage and bone tissue health. The key is to keep yourself active in a variety of ways, and you will be on your way to greater mobility and better health.</i></p> <p><b>IN THE SERIES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Cardiovascular Diseases</li> <li>&gt; Pulmonary Diseases</li> <li>&gt; Metabolic Diseases</li> <li>&gt; Immunological/Hematological Disorders</li> <li>&gt; Orthopedic Diseases and Disabilities</li> <li>&gt; Neuromuscular Disorders</li> </ul>		<p>Your Prescription for Health Series</p> <h3>EXERCISING WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES</h3> <p><i>If you have type 2 diabetes, regular physical activity is essential for controlling your blood glucose and managing your weight. Exercise also improves how well your body responds to insulin, which may reduce the need for medication because your muscle and fat will do a better job of taking glucose out of the blood. Furthermore, exercise may help protect you against heart disease, which often accompanies type 2 diabetes, by reducing body fat, blood pressure and improving your cholesterol levels. It will help you better understand your diet and exercise if you closely monitor your blood glucose levels to understand how you respond to different types of activities.</i></p> <p><b>IN THE SERIES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Cardiovascular Diseases</li> <li>&gt; Pulmonary Diseases</li> <li>&gt; Metabolic Diseases</li> <li>&gt; Immunological/Hematological Disorders</li> <li>&gt; Orthopedic Diseases and Disabilities</li> <li>&gt; Neuromuscular Disorders</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Getting Started</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with your healthcare practitioner before starting an exercise program and ask for specific programming recommendations and possible changes to your medications.</li> <li>• Your exercise prescription must be tailored to your medication schedule and the presence and severity of any diabetic complications, as well as your specific goals for your exercise program.</li> <li>• For every one hour of exercise, consume an additional 15 grams of carbohydrates before or after your workout.</li> <li>• Daily exercise is highly recommended. At a minimum, do moderate-intensity cardiovascular exercise for 20 to 60 minutes at least four days per week.</li> <li>• On two days per week, consider doing a lower-resistance, lower-intensity strength-training program with one set of exercises for the major muscle groups, with 10 to 15 repetitions.</li> <li>• Start slowly and gradually progress the intensity and duration of your workouts.</li> <li>• Take frequent breaks during activity if needed.</li> </ul>		<p><b>Exercise Cautions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid activity when your blood glucose is too high.</li> <li>• Extended or vigorous activity may trigger an excessive release of adrenaline and other hormones that can counteract the effects of insulin, thereby increasing blood glucose levels.</li> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids before and after exercise.</li> </ul> <p>Your exercise program should be modified to maximize the benefits while minimizing the risk of aggravating your health condition. Consider contacting a certified fitness professional who can work with you and your healthcare practitioner to establish realistic goals and design a safe and effective program that addresses your specific needs.</p> <p><small>*If your physician has not cleared you for independent physical activity and would like you to be monitored, a hospital setting or a medical fitness facility, you should exercise only under the supervision of a qualified professional. The American College of Sports Medicine has the names of medical fitness professionals that could meet your needs. The ACSM Center for Clinical Exercise Specialists (CES) is certified to support those with heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. The ACSM Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RECP) is qualified to support patients with a wide range of health challenges. You may locate an ACSM-certified fitness professional by using the Profile at <a href="http://www.acsm.org">www.acsm.org</a>.</small></p> <p>Contact Info: <a href="mailto:eim@acsm.org">eim@acsm.org</a></p>	
		<p>Founding Partner:</p>	



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## PHYSICIAN OFFICE FLYER

This flyer is available for download [here](#) in high resolution (for printing and Web sites) and low resolution (for e-mail attachments).

The flyer has a top section with a dark background and colorful light streaks. The text "A WHOLE NEW PRESCRIPTION" is in large white letters, with "IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO TAKE CONTROL" in smaller yellow and white letters below it. The bottom section has a white background with a photo of a smiling woman with glasses. Text includes "The Best Medicine", a paragraph about exercise's benefits, "THERE IS!", a call to action to talk to a doctor, the "Exercise is Medicine" logo, and a website link for more information.

**A WHOLE NEW PRESCRIPTION**

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO TAKE CONTROL

### The Best Medicine

What if there was one medicine so powerful in maintaining and improving health that it could prevent or treat dozens of diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and obesity?

*THERE IS!*

Talk with your doctor about the best exercise plan for you, and make physical activity part of your life and health care plan.



For more information, visit [www.exerciselsmedicine.org](http://www.exerciselsmedicine.org)

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