

# Being Active as a College Student

College is an exciting time of growth and new opportunities; however, it also brings the busyness of classes, assignments, and extracurricular activities. Making time for physical activity is essential for both your physical and mental well-being.

According to assessments of college student health and well-being:

- Only 46% meet recommended physical activity guidelines.
- 80% feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities and 50% struggle with anxiety.
- 45% report that stress negatively impacts their academic performance.
- 36% report that sleep difficulties negatively impact their academic performance.

Fortunately, research indicates physical activity reduces stress and anxiety and improves mood, sleep, and academic performance. Including physical activity into your life now will help you build healthy habits that can support you throughout your academic journey and beyond.



## To stay safe and injury free:

- Gradually increase your pace and time spent being active. Start low and go slow!
- Start with light to moderate effort and increase the intensity as your fitness improves.
- Warm up and cool down at an easy pace before and after exercise.
- Visit your student health center if you have any health concerns.

## What benefits of physical activity are important to you?

### Getting Started

#### Start Simple

Use breaks between classes or studying to take a walk, visit the gym, or do a short workout. Instead of driving, walk or bike to class. Park your car farther away. Take your notes or flashcards with you and review them while walking around campus or on a treadmill.

#### Be Active with a Friend

Do activities with friends to make it more enjoyable. Join a fitness class, intramurals, or an activity group on campus. Take a walk break with your study group. Being active with others will help you stick with it.

#### Make a Plan

As a college student you're busy with classes, studying, and other campus activities. Block off time in your calendar for exercise, just as you do for class and study sessions. This helps make physical activity a priority in your busy schedule.

#### Motivation

Experiment to find what you enjoy - doing something you enjoy makes it easier to stick with it. Listen to music, podcasts, or audiobooks while working out. If you can't make it to the gym, use workout videos in your dorm room.

# Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing. Build up to doing at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity activity, 75 minutes per week of vigorous activity, or a combination of both. You'll improve your energy, health, mood, sleep, and academic performance.

What?	How often?	How hard?	How much?
Any rhythmic, continuous activity, such as walking, hiking, jogging, biking, or swimming.	3-5 days per week. You can also do your activity in several shorter bouts per day.	Moderate - you're breathing harder but you can still have a conversation. Vigorous - you're breathing harder and talking is difficult.	Gradually build up to at least 30 minutes per day. Doing three 10-minute bouts per day counts the same.

Remember: Walking, biking, dancing, swimming, skating, and hiking are great. Some sports, like soccer and basketball, count too. Be active however and wherever you can – every minute counts.

# Strength Training

Strength training, such as working with weights, using resistance bands, or doing bodyweight exercises, makes you stronger and improves your overall health. Strength training also helps you maintain a healthy body weight and makes it easier to participate in a variety of daily activities.

What?	How often?	How hard?	How much?
Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines, or even bodyweight exercises (e.g., push-ups, planks, squats, and pull-ups)	2-3 days per week. Allow your muscles to recover at least 48 hours between sessions.	Start with a moderate effort and gradually build up to a hard effort (i.e., the last 1-2 repetitions should be more difficult). Use good technique and don't hold your breath or strain while lifting	8-12 repetitions per exercise targeting all the major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms). Repeat each exercise 2-4 times.

Remember: Avoid straining or holding your breath when lifting. If you need help with strength training, ask a certified exercise professional through your campus recreation center or the Kinesiology/Exercise Science program at your school.

# Other Types of Activity

- **Yoga, Tai Chi, and Pilates:** Improve balance, flexibility, and strength - they also help you relax.
- **Flexibility:** Stretch your muscles at least 2-3 days per week to the point of feeling tightness, but not pain. Hold each stretch for 10-30 seconds and repeat each exercise 2-4 times.
- **Limit prolonged sitting:** As a college student, you likely spend extended periods sitting in classes or studying, which can negatively impact your health. Break up long periods of sitting by standing, walking, or stretching at least every hour. All activity counts - simply move more and sit less!

How will I get started **this week?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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