

Talking with Your Patients about Physical Activity

Almost anyone at any age can benefit from some type of physical activity.

As part of your ongoing conversations with patients, include a discussion about exercise and physical activity. Here are a few suggestions to consider when talking about exercise.

Changes in physical activity patterns. If patients are just starting out or want to significantly increase their activity level:


- Encourage them to try all four types of exercise (endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility).
- Work together to determine the best activities for them.
- Create a safe activity plan that provides the most benefits.

Warning signs. Encourage your patients to talk with you if they experience:

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| ● Recent new symptoms | ● Unplanned weight loss |
| ● Dizziness or shortness of breath | ● Foot or ankle sores that won't heal |
| ● Chest pain or pressure | ● Joint swelling |
| ● Feelings that their heart is fluttering, skipping, or racing | ● A bleeding or detached retina, eye surgery, or laser treatment |
| ● Blood clots | ● A hernia |
| ● Infection or fever with muscle aches | ● Recent hip or back surgery |

Encouraging continued progress. Many people start out enthusiastically but find it hard to stay motivated. Help patients stay safe and interested in being active with this advice:

- Start out at a comfortable level and progress slowly.
- Make physical activity part of a daily routine.
- Try different activities to keep things fun and interesting.
- Choose to be active through daily activities as well as planned exercises.

 **Quick Tip**

Your positive, encouraging attitude will go a long way to energizing and motivating your patients to be active!

VISIT
www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life

- Print useful tools.
- Order free exercise guides, DVDs, and posters for your waiting room.

“Exercise is critical to maintaining health and managing many chronic illnesses.”
 — Alan Pocinki, M.D.

