

Exercise: When to check with your doctor first

Keeping physically active is key to a healthy lifestyle. But sometimes it's best to check with your doctor before you start to exercise. [By Mayo Clinic Staff](#)

Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if you haven't exercised for some time and you have health concerns, you may want to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

When to check with your doctor

Although moderate physical activity such as brisk walking is safe for most people, health experts suggest that you talk to your doctor before you start an exercise program if any of the following apply:

- You have heart disease.
- You have asthma or lung disease.
- You have diabetes or kidney disease.
- You have arthritis.

You should also check with your doctor if you have symptoms suggestive of heart, lung or other serious disease such as:

- Pain or discomfort in your chest, neck, jaw or arms during physical activity
- Dizziness or fainting with exercise or exertion
- Shortness of breath with mild exertion, at rest, or when lying down or going to bed
- Ankle swelling, especially at night
- A rapid or pronounced heartbeat
- A heart murmur that your doctor has previously diagnosed
- Lower leg pain when you walk, which goes away with rest

Finally, the American College of Sports Medicine recommends that you see your doctor before engaging in vigorous exercise if two or more of the following apply:

- You're a man older than age 45 or a woman older than age 55.
- You have a family history of heart disease before age 55 in men and age 65 in women.
- You smoke or you quit smoking in the past six months.
- You haven't exercised for at least 30 minutes, three days a week for three months or more.
- You're overweight or obese.
- You have high blood pressure or high cholesterol.
- You have impaired glucose tolerance, also called pre-diabetes.