

# Four ways to avoid pain and injury when starting a new exercise regime

Getting in the habit of exercising isn't easy. Not only is finding the time to exercise a major deterrent for people, the fear of aches, pain and injuries is also a reason that people put off starting a new exercise regime. But exercise doesn't necessarily have to lead to pain or injuries. Here are some simple things you can do to avoid these when starting out.

**1. Warm up:** It's important to warm up before your exercise. Warming up raises the temperature of the working muscles and the whole body. It also prepares your body for the increased stress of exercise. Muscles that have been warmed up are able to exercise for longer, and suffer less soreness and reduced injury risk.

**2. Don't overestimate what you can do:** A common mistake when starting a new exercise regime is to do too much. This can lead to pain after workouts, and may also increase your likelihood of injury. When you first begin a new workout plan, it's important to start gradually and at your own pace. Since everyone is different, avoid following an exercise programme that uses absolute distances or repetitions. Instead, focus on how you feel during a workout and listen to what your body is telling you.

**3. Take time to recover:** Taking a day or two off to rest each week is vital for recovery. But you don't just have to sit and do nothing for your recovery days to be effective. Active recovery is equally effective in helping your muscles recover and helping you avoid pain and injury. Active recovery might include lower-effort exercises such as walking or yoga. While you should take at least one day off between strength training workouts, another strategy to boost recovery is to work different muscle groups on different days. This will stop your muscles from using the same movements over and over, which can lead to overuse injuries.

**4. Learn proper form:** Developing correct form early on is important when starting a new exercise regime to avoid developing bad habits. In the beginning, go slow, try a range of different exercises and don't add too much weight before you've nailed technique. Executing the movements properly will help you avoid injury. If you choose to exercise at a gym or fitness centre, ask a trainer for pointers if you're unsure about your form. If you prefer to work out alone, there are lots of resources available online to guide your training. You might also consider filming yourself so you can see how your form looks.



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