



Fitness Factsheet

Do you do it five times a week?

We all need at least thirty minutes of moderate-to-intense physical activity almost every day, according to the latest from the American Heart Association. While our culture pressures women to shape up and lose weight, the lesbian community is relatively silent on the subject of fitness. In fact, lesbians may be twice as likely as heterosexual women to be overweight or obese. Overweight and chronic inactivity may contribute to an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes, certain cancers, and other health problems. At any size, exercise is a crucial way to take charge of your health and your life. Below, you'll find information you need and motivation you deserve to get active* today!

Beyond the cardiovascular benefits, exercise can help you de-stress, improve your social support system, and develop an empowering form of confidence. Still not convinced? Many of us believe that we do not have enough time or energy for exercise. Exercise increases the flow of oxygen in your body, making you feel more energetic and improving the quality of your sleep. We're not promising love at first sight with any of the following ideas, but trust us, when you move your body, your mind will follow.

- **Get Skilled:** From fencing to pole-dancing, try lessons in something you've always wanted to learn and gain confidence, strength, and meet new people!
- **Get Social:** Buddy up with a friend or coworker to take walks or a self-defense class, or join a group that meets regularly in your community to walk, bike, row, etc.
- **Get Inspired:** Yoga and tai chi unite the mind and body to improve strength and balance. Perfect for at-home fitness, yoga requires almost no equipment and very little space.
- **Get Involved:** Train for a 5k to benefit a cause you care about. Many races offer free training programs to participants at all levels in the months leading up to the event.
- **Get Tough:** Work out your frustrations in an aggressive or competitive activity like rugby or kickboxing. Bootcamp classes and team sports are for people of all fitness levels and might be great opportunities to meet women.

What About the Cost?

While gym memberships or home equipment can be expensive, it's possible to have a satisfying, effective workout at any budget. Hand weights are available at sporting goods or other major retailers for only a few dollars each, and your local library might have video or DVD workouts to check out. Walking, the most widely recommended form of exercise, is absolutely free!

In conclusion, here are some things to keep in mind:

- Safely maximize the health benefits of your workout by monitoring the intensity. Your target heart rate is a pulse (beats per minute) within a 50-80% zone of your maximum pulse, determined by your age. Use an online calculator to determine your THR. A good rule of thumb is that you should be able to speak, but not sing.
- Reduce potential for injury by gently stretching each muscle group before and after exercise.
- Whether you're starting an exercise plan for the first time or working toward an advanced goal, consistency is key. You will gradually become more comfortable working out at longer or more intense periods as your body becomes accustomed to exertion. Stay with it!

* Please do not start a new exercise regiment without first consulting your regular health provider. If you do not have a regular health provider, please feel free to contact the Mautner Project for a list of LGBT-friendly health providers in your area.