

Increasing Daily Activity Comfortably

There are many ways to increase your physical fitness. If you have been relatively inactive until now, the **best way is to do it comfortably!** Begin where you are and gently develop your ability so that you can keep going to reach your long-term goals. (Use your judgment to not push past what you and your physician believe to be healthy goals for you.)

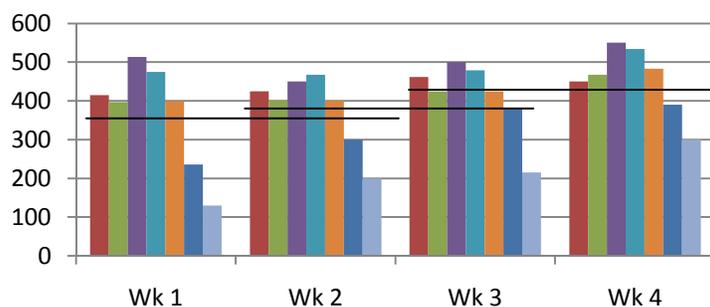
Here is the equipment you will need:

- Pedometer. This is an inexpensive device (\$15 to \$30 should buy a good-enough one) that clips onto your clothes and counts each step you take. That's all the equipment you need. Short list.

Here is what you need to do:

1. Clip on your pedometer each morning and wear it throughout the day — from wake-up to bedtime.
2. Remove the pedometer at bedtime each evening and record the number of steps you took that day. Then zero the counter in preparation for the next day.
3. Repeat Steps 1 and 2 every day for a week until you have seven step totals recorded. Graph these. (See Sarah's sample below).
4. At the end of the week, calculate your mean (average) daily steps and set that number as the minimum daily target for the next week. Since your target is an activity level you know you are capable of, setting it as your minimum for the coming week should be comfortably achievable — at the same time that it pushes you to do what you can.
5. Repeat Steps 1 through 4 week after week. Each new week's minimum target will always be within your reach but, because you are working on staying at or above the minimum, will gently increase over time.

Figure 1. Sarah's sample graph of daily steps over 4 weeks



Notice how the average number of daily steps from Week 1 became the minimum target for Week 2. Aiming at this target, which Sarah knew she could reach because of her activity during Week 1, pushed her to increase her average daily for Week 2. That average then became the minimum target for Week 3 and so forth. In this fashion, Sarah will gently increase her average daily activity week by week. Without pain, she will gain fitness and support her weight management goals.

