

Stay Physically Active Year-Round

Physical activity is a vital part of maintaining health and wellness across the lifespan. Recommendations vary according to each person's age and stage of life, but everyone needs to be moving! Comprehensive information is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/about/index.html>.

This publication offers practical tips and ideas for finding fun ways to stay active as the seasons change. You don't have to pay for a gym membership or expensive equipment. With a little creativity and enthusiasm, you can boost your energy, burn calories, and build stamina by exercising every day. Any amount of movement for any amount of time is better than none! Be sure to consult with your medical doctor before beginning any exercise program.

Spring

Outdoor Games to Get You Moving This Spring

Spring is the perfect time to get outside and play some games to get your heart pumping! Here are some activities you might remember from your childhood that you can share with your family and neighbors.

- **Capture the Flag:** Split into two teams and identify the "territory" of each. Try to grab the other team's flag without getting tagged. This game uses strategy and gets you running.
- **Obstacle Course:** Use what you have on hand to build a fun course in your yard. Jump over garden hoses or long sticks, run laps around trees, crawl through box tunnels, hop through hula hoops, and make your own balance beam. Getting kids involved in the building process inspires creative thinking.
- **Freeze Tag:** One person is "It" and tries to tag the others. When tagged, you have to freeze in place until another player tags you to set you free. This game keeps everyone moving and laughing!

Check out these CDC infographics that show the benefits of physical activity at any age: <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/health-benefits/index.html>.

15-Minute Exercise Ideas for Busy Days

Everyone is busy, and it can be challenging to squeeze in physical activity. But every little bit of movement helps, so set a timer for 15 minutes and try one of these options!

- **Dance Party:** Put on your favorite upbeat music and dance around the house, in your office on your lunch break, or out in the yard. Get your family involved, too!
- **Walk, Walk, Walk!** Whether you head outside or stay indoors, walking is a low-impact exercise with positive benefits. Next time someone at work schedules a meeting,



see if they are willing to walk and talk. Or find a free video on YouTube by searching “free walking exercise videos” or “walk at home 15 minutes.”

- **Declutter Dash:** Grab a box or trash bag and spend 15 minutes dashing around your house. Throw away junk mail, broken toys, and any trash you see. Clear off the kitchen counters. Throw away expired food items in the fridge. Clear off and wipe down bathroom surfaces. Focus on speed to get your blood pumping!
- **Body-Weight Strength Circuit:** Cycle through push-ups, squats, lunges, and planks for 45 seconds each with 15-second transitions. Repeat the circuit three to four times. This builds functional strength using just your body weight.

Here are some additional ideas from the CDC for getting started with physical activity: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-weight-growth/physical-activity/getting-started.html>.

Summer

Beat the Summer Heat

Here are some enjoyable ways to stay active during sweltering Southern summers!

Early Morning and Evening Options

- **Sunrise Walks or Jogs:** Start your day with a peaceful walk or run before 8 a.m. when temperatures are more bearable and the air is fresher.
- **Sunset Activities:** Take advantage of cooler evening temperatures for bike rides, outdoor sports, or neighborhood walks after 7 p.m.
- **Outdoor Yoga at Dawn:** Practice yoga or stretching routines on your porch or in a shaded yard area during the cooler morning hours.

Indoor Alternatives

- **Mall Walking:** Many shopping centers open early specifically for walkers—and it’s air-conditioned, social, and free.
- **Stair Climbing:** Use apartment building, parking garage, or stadium steps for a great cardio workout in a climate-controlled space.
- **Dance Parties:** Put on your favorite music and have spontaneous dance sessions in your living room—it’s cardio that doesn’t feel like exercise.
- **Indoor Rock Climbing:** Many gyms offer climbing walls that provide a full-body workout in cool comfort.

Water-Based Activities

- **Swimming and Water Workouts:** Hit the pool for laps, water aerobics, or even just walking/jogging in the shallow end. The water provides resistance while keeping you cool.
- **Sprinkler or Hose Workouts:** Set up sprinklers in your yard and do body-weight exercises, yoga, or dance routines while getting soaked—it’s refreshing and fun!



- **Water Balloon Games:** Organize active games like water balloon tosses, relay races, or tag with family or friends.
- **Car Wash Workouts:** Make washing your car an active affair with lots of bending, stretching, and movement while staying wet and cool.

The key is working with the climate rather than against it. Embrace the water, seek the shade, and adjust your timing to make summer fitness enjoyable rather than miserable.

Bike Rules for a Safe Summer

Bikes are a fun way to stay physically active. Follow these rules to stay safe while riding. Remember to stay hydrated, too!

- **Wear a helmet.** Protect your head in the event of accidents or falls.
- **Wear bright clothing.** Be more visible by wearing bright colors or reflective tape.
- **Obey traffic rules.** Stop at stop signs and traffic lights. Use arm signals when preparing to turn. Obey all posted traffic signs.
- **Ride with traffic.** Cycle on the right side of the road, just as if you were driving.
- **Stay alert and controlled.** Ride at a safe speed. Do not use headphones or look at your phone while cycling.
- **Yield to pedestrians and cars.** Always yield to people walking and driving vehicles to reduce your risk of a collision. Pause at intersections to walk your bike across if needed.
- **Use lights in the dark.** Use front and rear lights and reflectors when biking in low light or dark conditions. Even with lights, stay on well-lit routes at night for maximum safety.
- **Lock your bike.** Always lock your bike securely in highly visible areas to avoid theft. Do not leave keys in your bike lock.

Fall

Four Creative Ways to Get Kids Outdoors This Fall

As the temperatures cool down and the leaves start to change color, autumn is the perfect time to enjoy Mississippi's natural beauty. Here are some ways to add physical activity to your day.

- **Go on a leaf treasure hunt!** Collecting leaves of different sizes and colors can open the door to a variety of learning activities, such as sorting, tree identification, and art projects. While you're out hunting for leaves, challenge your kids to move in as many ways as they can: run, jump, hop, jog, twirl, dance, silly walk, or walk like different animals. Then use the leaves to create leaf crowns, leaf rubbings, or other crafts.



- **Take a color-matching walk.** Gather small items of different colors from around the house. When you go for a walk, can you find matching colors in the environment around you?
- **Start a nature collection.** Gather pinecones, leaves, rocks, and acorns. Compare textures and sizes. Sort by color, shape, and size. Look at school, in local parks, and in your neighborhood for different trees and the leaves they produce.
- **Organize a neighborhood project.** Work with other families to go for walks and pick up trash along the way. Rake leaves for a neighbor. Create an autumn scavenger hunt. Plan a family bike ride.

Whether you turn on some music and dance after dinner or take a walk in a local park, adding some physical activity to your daily routine is a healthy choice any time of year! If you are looking for more adventure, try visiting one of Mississippi's state parks for a hike on their trails. Find a park near you at <https://www.mdwfp.com/parks-destinations>.

Walk After Meals to Boost Your Health

One of the best times to squeeze in a short walk is after eating a delicious meal. Walking after meals provides several health benefits:

- **Helps digestion** by stimulating the movement of food through the digestive system.
- **Moderates blood sugar spikes**, which is especially important for people with diabetes.
- **Reduces bloating** and feelings of fullness.
- **Burns calories** and supports weight management.
- **Improves circulation** throughout the body.

Even a 10- to 15-minute walk can provide these benefits without requiring intense exercise while the body is digesting. Remember, small changes add up to big results, so try walking after lunch or dinner today!

Learn more about the benefits of physical activity at <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/benefits/index.html>.

Winter

Five Tips for Exercising in Winter

Don't let cold weather discourage you from staying physically active! Get creative and keep moving all winter long.

- **Turn on your favorite music and dance.** Make yourself a playlist that gets your heart pumping and includes a slower song or two for warming up and cooling down.
- **Find an exercise buddy who will walk with you, try new activities with you, and keep you accountable.** Start with the people in your house, including your kids, but widen your search. You may need more than one buddy, based on your interests and activity level.



- **Find free exercise videos online or on free apps.** Try multiple options to find what works for you! Look for apps that have a variety of exercises suitable for your fitness goals, and check user reviews.
- **Stay safe when exercising outside.** Warm up thoroughly, wear layers, stay hydrated, and wear proper winter gear. If you're outside at night, be sure to wear reflectors or light-colored clothing to stay visible to traffic.
- **Try home workouts** that don't require equipment, such as jumping jacks, lunges, squats, and push-ups, or search for body-weight workouts online.

Try the Four-Corner Workout This Winter!

Setup

Designate four corners of a room or outdoor space. Each corner represents a different exercise.

How It Works

- Spend 30–60 seconds at each corner doing the assigned exercise, or do a specific number of reps.
- Move to the next corner and repeat.
- Complete three to four rounds of all four corners.
- Rest 1–2 minutes between rounds.

Sample Four-Corner Workout

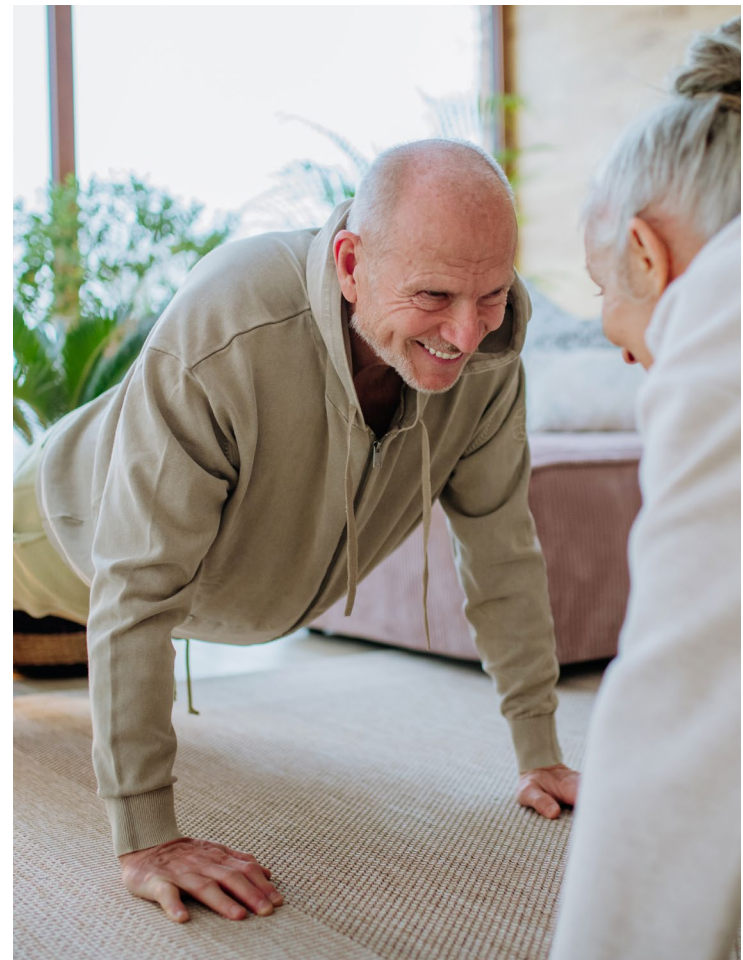
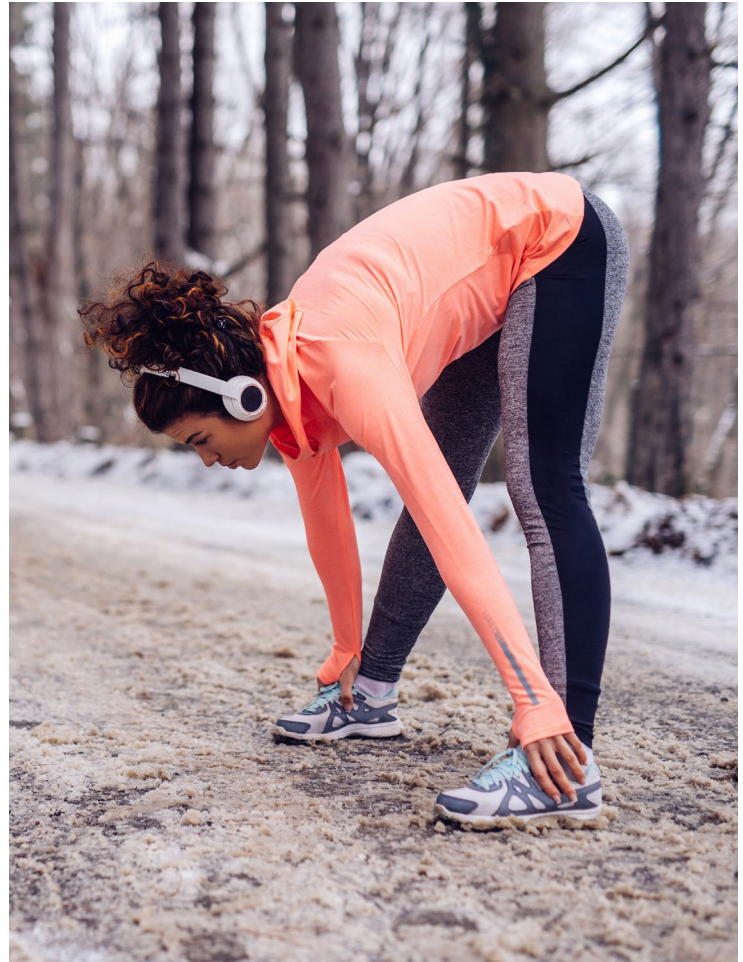
- **Corner 1: Squats.** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, lower yourself down like sitting in a chair, then stand back up.
- **Corner 2: Push-ups.** Start in plank position, lower your chest to the ground, then push back up. (You can modify this exercise by putting your knees on the ground.)
- **Corner 3: Jumping Jacks.** Jump your feet apart while raising your arms overhead, then jump your feet back together while bringing your arms back down.
- **Corner 4: High Knees.** Run in place, bringing your knees up toward your chest as high as possible.

Tips

- Warm up for 3–5 minutes before starting.
- Focus on proper form over speed.
- Modify exercises to match your fitness level.
- Stay hydrated throughout.
- Cool down and stretch when finished.

This workout requires no equipment and can be done anywhere, plus you can tailor each exercise to your needs. Additional options include wall sits, lunges, shoulder taps (from a plank position), planks, triceps dips on a sturdy chair, “dead bugs,” and step touches side to side.

Check out the CDC's physical activity guidelines for adults: <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity-basics/guidelines/adults.html>.



Year-Round

A Place for Everyone: Developing Age-Friendly Communities

From safe playgrounds for young children to accessible walkways for adults seeking exercise, people need different services from their communities across their lifespans. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one in five Americans will be retirement age by 2030, which offers an opportunity for communities to consider new ways to support their senior members' quality of life.

What are the key components of an age-friendly community? Consider the Eight Domains of Livability from AARP that address physical, mental, and emotional well-being:

1. **Outdoor spaces and buildings designed to encourage physical activity.** People of all ages and abilities need safe and accessible sidewalks, paths, parks, and gathering places.
2. **Transportation.** Traveling safely and independently to desired destinations requires accessible and affordable transportation options, especially those that cater to older adults who may need additional accommodations.
3. **Housing.** Aging in place comfortably means older adults need safe, affordable, and physically accessible housing options that enable them to access food, transportation, medical care, physical activity, and social interaction.
4. **Social participation.** Staying engaged with others is a key component of mental and emotional health. Age-friendly communities provide civic, recreational, and cultural activities that encourage participation from citizens of all ages.
5. **Respect and social inclusion.** A community environment that fosters diversity, intergenerational connections, and tolerance strengthens individual and group bonds.
6. **Civic participation and employment.** Age-friendly communities welcome input and participation from older members whose experience, knowledge, and skills can benefit the entire group. Keeping older adults engaged in the workforce and in civic life contributes to their sense of purpose and well-being.
7. **Health services and community supports.** Health and well-being depend on access to supportive community and health-service providers, including medical and long-term care.
8. **Communication and information.** Clear and easily understandable information provided through trusted and accessible channels empowers older adults to make informed decisions. Age-friendly communities are inclusive and responsive to the communication needs of older adults.



Rucking 101

What Is Rucking?

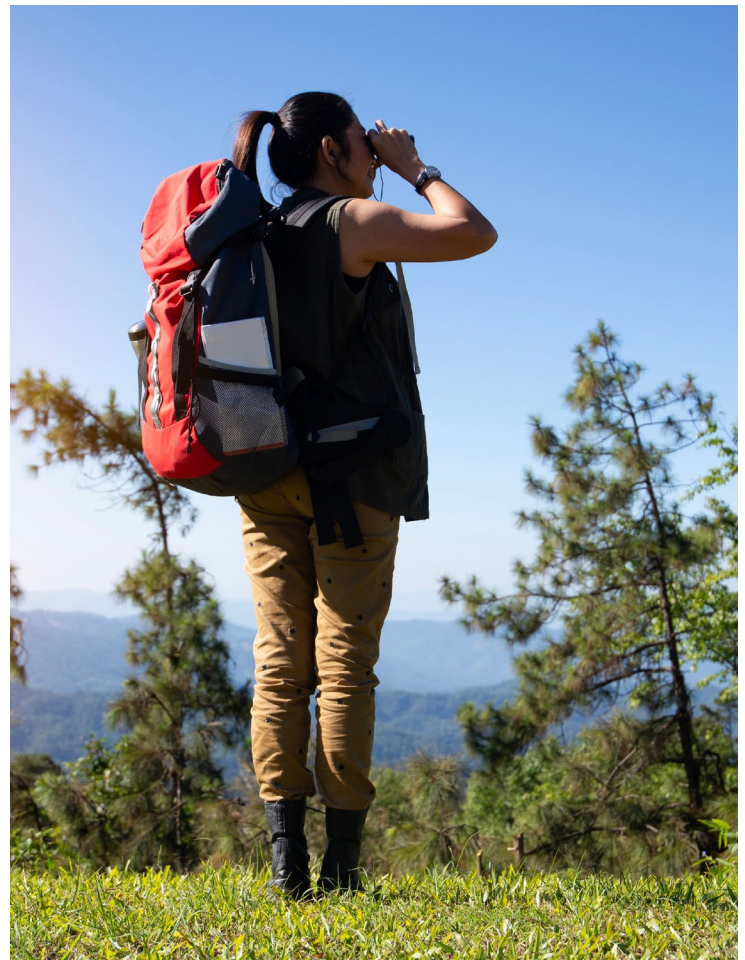
Rucking is simply walking or hiking with a weighted backpack. Rucking adds strength training to your cardio workout, burns more calories, and improves endurance.

How to Get Started

- Find a sturdy backpack.
- Add weight to it. You can use books, bricks, dumbbells, water bottles, or bags of sand. Wrap them in towels to protect your back against hard edges. Start light—about 10 pounds.
- Adjust the straps so the weight sits higher on your back, between your shoulder blades. You can put a ball or towel in the bottom of your pack to lift the weight higher.
- Go for a walk! Start with short distances and build up as you get stronger.

Why It Works

- Walking uses your glutes, hips, quads, hamstrings, calves, shins, and feet.
- Rucking engages your back, neck, and shoulders to counter the weight of the backpack. Rucking gives you a full-body workout!
- Rucking is more intense than walking but not as challenging as running. So if you're already walking for exercise, rucking can take your physical activity to the next level while still being a low-impact exercise.
- You're combining strength training and cardio, which saves time! Most people ruck outside, which reduces your screen time, gets you out into the natural world, and connects you to your community.





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AIM for CHangE works in targeted counties to partner with local community change agents to increase access to healthy foods, identify safe spaces for physical activity, and work toward policy changes for a healthier Mississippi. Learn more at <http://www.msuent.ms/aim>.

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