



## MODULE FIFTEEN

# Fine Tune Your Physical Activity



### How can I be more physically active and stay motivated?

Now that you have been physically active for several weeks and have been progressing your physical activity, we will review some ways you can fine tune your activity. Fine tuning means you have identified at least a few activities that you enjoy doing and can do on a regular basis. At this point, you are working toward building physical activity into your daily routine.

**“I enjoy life, and do something active every day. Now, I walk with my friends from VA every Tuesday, and sometimes we ride bikes and fish. It’s nice bonding time.”**

– Walter, lost 184 pounds

As you hone your physical activity routine, it is important to consider tips and strategies to stay safe while exercising. You may also have questions about being physically active while managing chronic health conditions or chronic pain. Most Veterans will benefit from being physically active and rarely are there activities that are “off-limits.” It is important to work with your MOVE! team to identify the activities that will benefit you the most and may even reduce some of your pain symptoms.

### In This Module You Will:

1. Learn how to refine your physical activity plan.
2. Identify ways to cope with chronic conditions or pain while still being active.
3. Learn how to stay motivated to be active.

# Progress Check-In



I met my previous healthy eating goal

I met my previous physical activity goal

*My weight today is \_\_\_\_\_ pounds.*

Reflect on how well you met your goals from the last module.

What successes did you have?

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What challenges did you encounter?

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What helped you address those challenges?

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## Even the Smallest Changes Can Make a Big Difference

What benefits did you notice from your weight-loss efforts this past week?

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|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better sleep       | <input type="checkbox"/> More energy        | <input type="checkbox"/> Fewer prescription medications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better check-up    | <input type="checkbox"/> Less joint pain    | <input type="checkbox"/> Better blood pressure control  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improved memory    | <input type="checkbox"/> Better mood        | <input type="checkbox"/> Better blood sugar control     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes fit better | <input type="checkbox"/> Improved cooking   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stress relief      | <input type="checkbox"/> Greater confidence | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More endurance     | <input type="checkbox"/> More organized     | _____   |

# How Active Am I?

Reflect on your current physical activity plan.

Target Activity Level	Current Activity Level
Be active at least <b>5 days</b> per week	I am active _____ days per week.
Be active for at least <b>10 minutes</b> at a time	I am active for at least _____ minutes at a time.
Do strengthening activities at least <b>2 days</b> per week	I do strengthening activities _____ days per week.
Do <b>150 minutes</b> of moderate-intensity <b>or 75 minutes</b> of vigorous-intensity activity per week	I do _____ minutes of _____-intensity activity per week.

What have you changed about your physical activity?

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How have you made physical activity a part of your daily routine?

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What kind of increases can you make to your physical activity routine?

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# Fine Tuning Your Physical Activity



**Teresa's Tips**  
**Be Safe**

*“When exercising outdoors, it is important to be safe. Bring identification, emergency contact, and illness and medication information with you. Let someone know where you are going and how long you will be gone. Carry your cell phone if you have one. Take a familiar route. Be active in public places—avoid isolated trails, paths, and poorly lit areas. Consider exercising with a buddy. Wear comfortable fitting socks and shoes and brightly colored or reflective clothing.”*

## Tips for Warm and Cold Weather Activity

Warm Weather	Cold Weather
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise in the early morning or after the sun sets.</li> <li>• Take frequent rest and water breaks.</li> <li>• Choose water or a low-calorie sport drink.</li> <li>• Avoid beverages with alcohol or caffeine because they can cause dehydration.</li> <li>• Wear light, loose-fitting clothing made of breathable fabrics.</li> <li>• Reduce your speed or distance as needed.</li> <li>• Exercise indoors during ozone alerts, extreme heat, and very high humidity.</li> <li>• Use sunscreen, hats, and sunglasses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dress in layers. Start with a synthetic material—it will draw the sweat away from your body and dry quickly. Then layer with wool or cotton to soak up moisture. Your final layer should help keep out the cold air or rain—something lightweight and wind/waterproof.</li> <li>• Wear a hat to avoid losing heat through your head.</li> <li>• Protect your feet with socks to keep them warm and dry.</li> <li>• Choose mittens over gloves so your fingers can warm each other.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of water—you can become dehydrated in warm or cold weather. Drink water before you go out and bring some with you.</li> <li>• Pay attention to your body—if you start to feel overheated or too cold, go back indoors.</li> </ul>	



### **Hannah's How-To** ***Find the Right Fit***

- “Whatever the activity, wearing the right kind of shoes is very important for your comfort and safety.**
- Shop around for various styles and brands. Ask the salesperson to assist you in choosing the shoe best suited for your chosen activity.
  - If possible, go to an athletic store and be fitted for shoes that are appropriate for your width, arches, and gait.
  - When trying on new shoes, wear the kind of socks you will wear when you are active. Wear cotton socks or athletic socks.
  - Your feet swell slightly during activity and at the end of the day. Shop for new shoes right after you have been active or at the end of the day.
  - Walk around when trying on shoes. There is no need to break in athletic shoes. They should feel comfortable right away.
  - There should be one thumb’s width of space between your longest toe and the end of the shoe.
  - The heel should not pinch or slip when you walk.
  - The shoes should bend easily at the ball of your feet just behind your toes.
  - After exercising check your feet for any sores, cuts, or blisters. Tell your primary care team if these don’t heal.
  - Replace your shoes when the soles (bottom) are worn or slick. If the insoles (inside cushions) are worn, but the rest of the shoe is still in good shape, you can replace just the insoles.
  - If you are walking regularly to manage your weight, you may need to replace athletic shoes frequently. Many runners replace their athletic shoes every 3–6 months.”

## **Being Physically Active with Chronic Conditions**

Veterans who experience chronic conditions like arthritis or low back pain or who have physical limitations can still benefit from moving more. As you begin to fine tune your physical activity, it is important to recognize the activities you should limit and those you should do more of to improve your health and your condition. Physical activity **almost always helps improve** medical conditions. It is wise to reduce activity if your condition worsens. Many Veterans can begin mild or moderate intensity exercise **safely** without having a check-up.

<b>Condition</b>	<b>LIMIT these Activities</b>	<b>DO MORE of these Activities</b>
<b>Arthritis of Hip or Knee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any high-repetition, high-resistance or high-impact activity.</li> <li>Weight-bearing activities:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jogging</li> <li>Stair climbing</li> <li>High-impact cardio</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair exercises</li> <li>Outdoor or stationary cycling</li> <li>Swimming, water aerobics, water walking</li> <li>Elliptical machines</li> <li>Rowing machines</li> </ul>
<b>Osteoporosis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bending forward at the waist               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sit-ups or crunches</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strength training to help reduce bone loss and strengthen muscles</li> </ul>
<b>Low Back Pain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High-impact activities that involve running or jumping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair exercises</li> <li>Walking</li> <li>Slow jogging</li> <li>Outdoor or stationary cycling</li> <li>Swimming, water aerobics, water walking</li> <li>Elliptical machines</li> <li>Rowing machines</li> <li>Core strengthening exercises</li> </ul>
<b>Lower Extremity Amputation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No limitations with proper prosthesis.</li> <li>Running, sprinting, and swimming will require special adaptations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With proper prosthesis, no activities are limited.</li> <li>As you lose weight, your prosthesis may need to be adjusted.</li> </ul>
<b>Stroke or Spinal Cord Injury</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This will vary based on your function and abilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask for a referral to a physical therapist or kinesiologist for an individualized activity plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Balance Problems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unassisted walking</li> <li>Outdoor cycling</li> <li>Jumping or side-to-side motion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair exercises</li> <li>Stationary cycling</li> <li>Walking on treadmill with handrail</li> <li>Other fitness machines with handles or grips</li> <li>Swimming, water aerobics, water walking</li> <li>Referral to exercise specialist for moderate-to-severe problems.</li> </ul>

## Chronic Pain and Weight

Many Veterans experience chronic pain. Being in chronic pain can lead to: 1) Reduced activity or movement, 2) Decreased ability to shop and prepare healthy meals, and 3) Depression and anxiety, contributing to isolation and poor sleep. If you have chronic pain, increasing movement can be challenging. However, regular physical activity often **improves chronic pain**. It may sometimes take a few weeks to begin to see a benefit.



### Research has shown:

- Weight loss can improve function and decrease pain.
- Increasing activity and healthy behaviors improves function and can reduce pain regardless of weight loss.
- Increasing healthy behaviors and activity can also improve cardiovascular health and conditions like diabetes and sleep apnea.

Dealing with chronic pain can be a significant barrier to being physically active but there are things you can do to manage your pain!

### Retrain the Brain

Our brain is a fierce protector of our bodies. Pain is only one way our brains take action to protect against actual or potential dangers. With chronic pain, the brain might produce pain even when there is no actual threat. Over time, we may start to believe that movement is dangerous because it hurts when we move. Exercise works best when you can reduce the threat value of movement. By gradually showing the brain that movement is helpful and not harmful, activity can increase over time. Sometimes this requires that we say, "It may hurt, but that doesn't mean that it's doing harm."



#### Smart Alex

**"When the nervous system lives with pain for a long time, it becomes "sensitized." This means that your "warning bells" go off even though no actual tissue damage is occurring. The key to managing this is to find a level of activity you can maintain without the alarms getting louder. Research shows that when people understand the role of the brain and the nervous system in the production of pain, they move more, are less depressed, and experience less pain."**

## Pace Your Way to Success

The best way to ensure success with exercise is to pace yourself. First determine how many minutes you can move before pain becomes louder, (“Can I walk 10 minutes without increasing my pain?”), then start the first few sessions at 20% less than your limit (8 minutes). Increase your total walking time by 10% (or 1 minute) each week. This is called graded exercise and is proven to be the best way to exercise when you have chronic pain.



It is also important to stretch. When pain is present longer than we expect, muscles can become “overprotective” and start to tighten even at the thought of movement. You can improve your flexibility by starting slowly and listening to your body. Practice slow movements that keep you feeling safe. Explore boundaries and breathe while you move.

*If you think your pain may keep you from physical activity, talk with your health care team.*



### Smart Alex

“Soreness and cramps are signs that your muscles are adjusting to new activity. You can fight muscle soreness and cramps by gradually increasing how often, how hard, and how long you are active. Wear socks and shoes that are comfortable and made for physical activity. Warm up before, and cool down after each activity. Pain-relief creams, ice, or a heating pad may offer some relief. Do some gentle activity to keep sore muscles moving. Doing no activity will make your soreness worse.

*If you do get a muscle cramp:*

- Gently stretch the muscle and hold it until the cramp subsides.
- Massage the cramped area.
- If it continues to hurt, put ice on the cramped muscle for a few minutes.
- Sometimes changing what you eat and drink can help. Ask your MOVE! dietitian or primary care team for guidance.

**If you have an injury that is affecting your ability to exercise, talk with your MOVE! team for guidance.”**

# Physical Activity and Medications

As you are becoming more physically active, it is important to consider the medications you are taking and how they may affect your activity. Review the following list—are you currently taking any of these medications? If so, review the solutions you can implement to be safe while being active.

Medication Class	Examples	Solutions
<p><b>BETA-BLOCKERS</b>                      May limit the heart’s ability to beat faster in response to exercise. This may result in difficulty catching your breath, fatigue, and sore muscles. Even though your heart rate does not increase, you will still get all the benefits of exercise.</p>	<p><i>Propranolol, atenolol, metoprolol, sotalol, carvedilol</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase your warm-up and cool-down time.</li> <li>• Ask your health care team if you can take a different medication or a smaller amount.</li> </ul>
<p><b>STEROIDS</b>                      May cause loss of muscle mass leading to weakness and poor endurance. They can also cause mood swings, which could affect your motivation to be active.</p>	<p><i>Prednisone, dexamethasone, hydrocortisone, methylprednisolone, fludrocortisone</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start slowly and gradually increase physical activity.</li> <li>• Think positively. Call on friends and family to help you stay motivated.</li> <li>• Ask your health care team if you can take a different drug or a smaller amount.</li> </ul>
<p><b>THYROID REPLACEMENT MEDICATION</b>                      May limit your ability to exercise if you take too much or too little medicine.</p>	<p><i>Levothyroxine</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask your health care provider to check your thyroid level to make sure you are taking the right amount.</li> </ul>

Medication Class	Examples	Solutions
<p><b>DIABETES MEDICATIONS</b></p> <p>Exercise naturally causes your blood sugar to go down. In some cases, exercise combined with your regular diabetes medications could result in low blood sugar. Symptoms of low blood sugar include feeling shaky, lightheaded, weak, confused, or extremely hungry.</p>	<p><i>Insulin, glyburide, glipizide, metformin, pioglitazon</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor your blood sugar with your glucose meter before, during, and after a new exercise routine until you become familiar with how the exercise affects your blood sugar. Your health care team can give you upper and lower limits.</li> <li>• Don't exercise on an empty stomach or when you are dehydrated. Think ahead and have glucose tablets or hard candy with sugar or a beverage containing sugar with you while exercising. Avoid exercising too close to bedtime.</li> <li>• Ask your health care team about adjusting your diabetes medications if you experience low blood sugar before, during, or after exercise.</li> </ul>

As you improve fitness and lose weight, let your health care team know. You may be able to decrease your dosages or discontinue some medications. Always consult with your health care team before making any changes to medications.

“Another important thing I learned is that regardless of your physical limitations, everybody can exercise. Being active with bilateral leg braces was a struggle I needed to overcome. I started by walking for 30 minutes, with lots of breaks. Today, I regularly walk 5 miles every morning, taking breaks when I need to.”

– John, lost 63 pounds



# Staying Motivated with Physical Activity

Make physical activity part of your daily routine! Here are some ways to help you stay on track with your physical activity routine:

- Set realistic and achievable goals.
- Schedule activity by making it part of your regular routine—choose a convenient time of the day.
- Have a support system to stay encouraged – friends, family, group exercise.
- Join a gym or club or consider using a trainer.
- Use music and TV fitness programs.
- Use a pedometer/odometer and record your progress in your *Food and Physical Activity Log*. You can also track your time for either moderate or vigorous physical activity.
- Do a variety of activities to stay prevent boredom.
- Keep moving—even small amounts of movement throughout the day add up so check your progress regularly.
- **Have fun!**



## Goal-Setting Check-Out

### Goals for Next Week

Set one new healthy eating and physical activity goal to work on over the next week. Remember to make it SMART (see Module 1).

Healthy Eating:

I will \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Physical Activity:

I will \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you had trouble meeting your goals from last week, what will you do differently this week?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Module Summary

## *Fine Tune Your Activity*

Fine tuning your activity means you have identified at least a few activities that you enjoy doing and can do on a regular basis. It is important to consider ways to stay safe while exercising outdoors and in different types of weather. Be sure to:

- Drink plenty of water—you can become dehydrated in warm or cold weather. Drink water before you go out and bring some with you.
- Pay attention to your body—if you start to feel overheated or too cold, go back indoors.

“There have been so many positive changes with the improved mobility that it’s hard to name them all. I’m no longer diabetic, I use fewer medications, and my physical problems have been greatly reduced. I can now keep up with my 5-year-old granddaughter.”

– Robert, lost 201 pounds

## *Being Active and Managing Chronic Pain*

Veterans who experience chronic conditions like arthritis or low back pain or who have physical limitations **can benefit** from moving more. Depending on the type of condition, it is important to recognize the activities you should limit and those you should do more of to improve your health. Physical activity **almost always improves** medical conditions.

If you have chronic pain, increasing movement can be challenging. However, regular physical activity often **improves chronic pain**. Our brain is a fierce protector of our bodies. Pain is only one way our brains take action to protect against actual or potential dangers. By gradually showing the brain that movement is helpful and not harmful, activity can increase over time.

## *Physical Activity and Medications*

It is important to consider the medications you are taking and how they may affect your activity. Some types of medications can interfere with being active. If you have concerns about how your medications may be affecting your activity, talk to your health care team. Always consult with your health care team before making any changes to medications.

## Module To-Do:

1. Set two new weekly SMART goals in your Module Check-Out.
2. Record in your *Food and Activity Log* every day.
3. Consider ways you can fine tune your physical activity. Consider how you can be physically active with chronic conditions or pain.
4. Review Module 16 in preparation for your next meeting.