



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 2

You've made it to Week 2 – well done! Becoming more aware of where calories are in your meal may be challenging, but stick with it; it gets easier.

From this week, we'd like you to start increasing your activity levels to help support your weight loss.

We've got tips to help you do this gradually but if you want a bit of structure, why not try our Couch to 5K running plan and Strength and Flex workout, which are both suitable for beginners.

Laura's diary

Week 2



I hadn't done any exercise for 10 years when I came across the Couch to 5K plan. When I saw that week 1 involved running for only a minute at a time, I felt relieved that someone understood my limitations, and the walking intervals made it feel less scary. I didn't find it easy but it was much easier than I expected. Having the structure of a plan was hugely helpful and having designated 'running days' meant I couldn't make excuses. I feel like I've taken something that I was so afraid of and I've well and truly beaten it. Not only have I conquered a fear but I've developed a new habit that I know is doing my health enormous good.

Your actions for Week 2

- Get active – try to get 150 minutes of physical activity every week from now on. If you've not done much for a while, aim to increase your activity levels gradually over the next few weeks
- Download the [Couch to 5K](#) and [Strength and Flex](#) programmes
- Plan when and where you are going to exercise and write it down
- Stick to your daily calorie intake – 1,400kcal for women and 1,900kcal for men

Did you know?

An unexpected benefit of taking on something new like physical activity is increased self-confidence and improved self-esteem.

Tackling something and achieving success in one area can produce a real mental boost, which can transfer into other aspects of life. ✓

Week 2

Dust off those trainers

Evidence shows that people who combine regular physical activity with calorie-counting are more successful at losing weight and keeping it off.

But not all of us are naturally sporty. In fact, some of us may not have done any meaningful exercise since school. This makes starting again quite daunting and it can be hard to know where to begin.

You can start small by finding ways to fit more activity into your daily life and build up from there.

Try getting off the bus one stop early and walking the rest of the way or taking the stairs instead of the lift.

But as well as being generally more active, you could start setting aside a few days during the week for more structured exercise.

Your target is at least 150 minutes of moderate activity each week.

Moderate activity will raise your heart rate and make you breathe faster and feel warmer. One way to tell if you're exercising at a moderate level is if you can still talk but you can't sing the words to a song.

Brisk walking, bike rides or swimming are great examples, but if these don't appeal and you need something more structured, you could try one of the exercise plans available on NHS Choices. These are free and can be done at home or in the local park. Crucially, they recognise the limitations of a beginner. They include:

- Couch to 5K – a nine-week running plan
- 5K+ running podcasts for Couch to 5K graduates
- Strength and Flex podcasts – a five-week workout plan
- 10-minute home workouts – quick and effective exercise routines

Get these and lots more exercise tips at [nhs.uk/fitness](https://www.nhs.uk/fitness).

Before you start, plan. Think about whether you need new trainers, where and on which days you're going to exercise, and when in the day you can fit it in. A little preparation can mean the difference between getting going and making excuses not to bother.

Whatever you choose make sure it's something you enjoy, or it may be hard to find the motivation to do it regularly.

You may feel a little bit more hungry as you step up your activity levels or start a new exercise regime.

That's normal. You're burning more calories, so your body needs to replace the energy spent during exercise.

But be careful how you refuel. A post-exercise snack high in calories could actually see you putting on weight instead of losing it. Instead, choose foods that are lower in calories but still filling, such as fruit, low-fat yoghurt or reduced-fat hummus with brown pita.

Walk more with a pedometer

Pedometers, which you can buy or download as a smartphone app, are a fun way to keep track of your walking and help you increase your activity levels gradually.

The pedometer will measure every step you take: around the house, at work, out and about, on the school run or to the park. Use the pedometer to work out your average daily steps and then start adding extra steps.

Getting started

Things people choose when they start to become more active:

- walking
- cycling
- gardening
- swimming
- dancing
- playing a sport, such as badminton, football or bowls
- stretching exercise, e.g. yoga
- going to the gym

If you have a medical condition, please seek medical advice before beginning physical activity.

Tips to build activity into your day

Ten easy ways to raise your physical activity levels and burn more calories.

Walk more

Walking is one of the easiest and most effective ways of increasing your activity. Find a walking pal or join a walking group.

Take the stairs

Walk up and down stairs and escalators instead of taking the lift, or get off the lift a few floors early and use the stairs.

Take up running

Our popular Couch to 5K running plan is designed to get just about anyone running 5km in nine weeks.

Exercise in your local park

Download our Strength and Flex podcast series and get fit in five weeks.

Active travel

Cycle or walk part, if not all, of your journey to work. Get off public



transport a stop before your destination and walk the rest of the way.

Ditch the car

If you need to drive to work, try to park further away from your destination and walk the rest of the way.

Exercise at work

Exercise before or after work or during your lunch break. Your workplace may have a gym or you may have access to a swimming pool or squash courts.

Family fun

Be active with the family. Take your children to the swimming pool or play in the garden or park.

Green fingers

Gardening can provide a good workout. You could also add a social element by getting an allotment.

Healthier cooking

Frying adds fat to your meals. Try these healthier alternatives:

Grilling

Grilling is a quick and healthier way of cooking as it doesn't use any fat.

Poaching

Poaching is a fat-free way of cooking eggs, some meats and fish, using a pan of boiling water.

Steaming

Steaming is a fat-free way of cooking veg and fish

Boiling

Boiling doesn't require any oil and therefore adds no calories to food.

Calorie counter

Calories in common foods:

Apple: 53kcal

Orange: 62kcal

Banana: 105kcal

Six carrot sticks: 35kcal

2tbsp of hummus: 55kcal

Buttered brown toast: 115kcal

Cup of tea with semi-skimmed milk: 13kcal

Mug of coffee with semi-skimmed milk: 20kcal

Look up the calories of more foods and drinks on our calorie counter at nhs.uk/calorie-count



Couch to 5K

This podcast series is designed to get just about anyone running 5km in nine weeks. The plan involves three runs per week, gradually building up fitness and stamina until you can run for 30 minutes.

nhs.uk/Couchto5k