

Before You Start an Exercise Program: Twenty-one Questions

Be sure to check with your physician if you can answer yes to any of the following questions:

1. Have you been physically inactive for the past six months or longer (i.e., not participated in workouts at least twice a week)?
2. Are you a man over the age of forty? A woman over the age of fifty?
3. Is your current weight 20 percent or more over the ideal?
4. Is your BMI (body mass index) 36 or higher?
5. Are you pregnant or a new mother?
6. Would you describe your lifestyle as "sedentary"?
7. Do you smoke cigarettes regularly?
8. Have you ever been diagnosed with a heart condition? Have you ever experienced a heart attack?
9. Have you ever experienced unexplained pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, or other unusual discomfort at any time?
10. Have you ever experienced rapid, slow, or irregular heartbeat?
11. Do you have wounds or cuts on your feet that heal slowly or not at all?
12. Have you ever inexplicably lost your balance or fallen?
13. Have you fallen more than twice in the past year, for any reason (even ones you can explain)?
14. Have you experienced an unexplained weight loss in the past six months?
15. Have you experienced an unexplained weight gain or tendency to retain water in the past six months?
16. Have you ever been told by a doctor to restrict or modify your physical activity?
17. Do you regularly take prescription or over-the-counter medications that may cause dizziness, drowsiness, or diminished coordination?
18. Do you have any chronic pain in your bones or joints or loss of movement or range of motion?
19. If you are a woman, have you had any condition (bulimia, anorexia, binge eating, cessation of menstrual periods, low calcium intake) that would put you at risk for osteoporosis?
20. Do you have a chronic or serious health condition, such as diabetes?
21. Within the past year, have you been treated for a serious injury or illness or undergone surgery or extensive therapy of any kind?