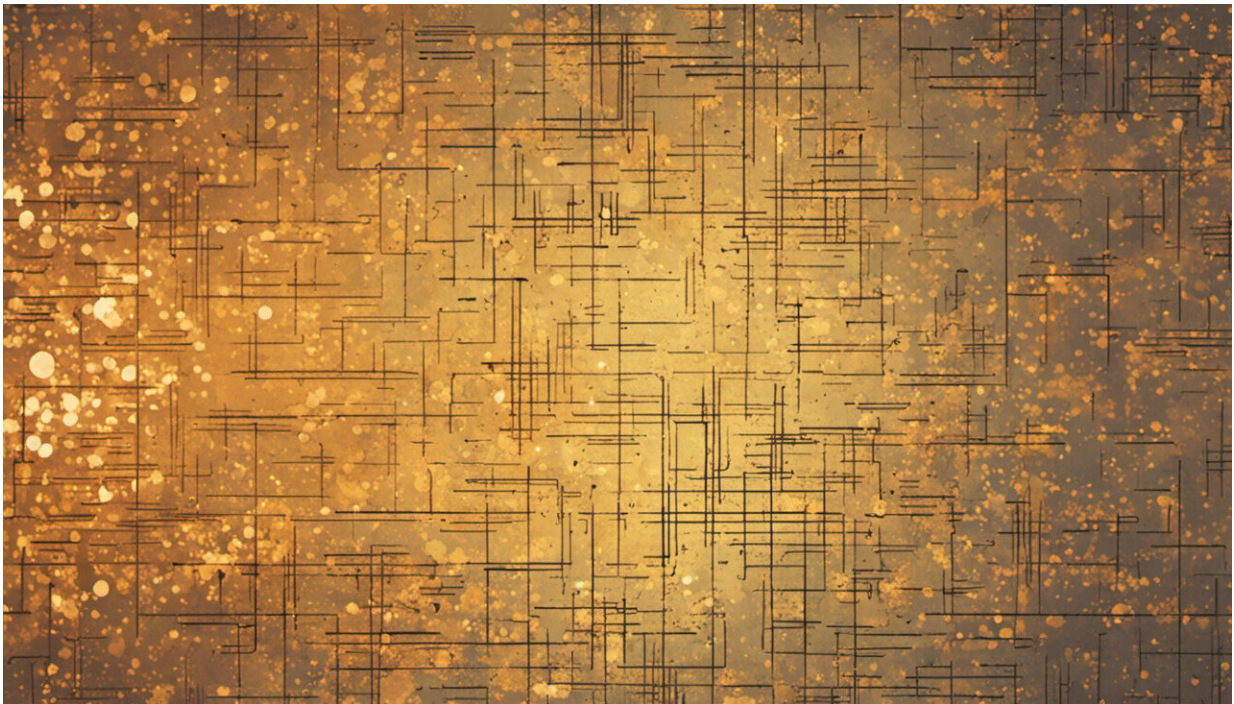


# 9 common misconceptions about exercise—and what research actually tells us

December 16 2019, by Julie Broderick

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

It can be hard to include exercise in our busy lives, despite the best of intentions. There are a lot of reasons people don't exercise, and a lot of misconceptions about exercise. Here are nine common misconceptions about exercise and what research actually tells us.

**1. I was fit once, so I don't need to exercise** Unfortunately, the health benefits of [exercise](#) won't last if you don't sustain your exercise regime. A significant reduction or drop out can cause a [marked loss of initial benefits, such as cardiovascular fitness and endurance](#). Consistency is the key. Mix it up and keep it interesting as maintaining high levels of physical activity throughout your life is associated with the best health outcomes.

**2. Being on your feet all day doesn't have the same benefit as exercise** Being on your feet, moving around all days means you have a [high level of physical activity](#). This is health enhancing. To optimize health benefits, increase your level of exercise—enough to cause you to sweat a little—to [at least 150 minutes a week](#), where possible.

**3. Exercise needs to be ten minutes or longer, otherwise it's a waste of time** The good news is that [recent guidelines](#) have eliminated the need for physical activity to be delivered in bouts of at least ten minutes. There is no minimum threshold for health benefits, so carry out active daily chores, such as carrying heavy shopping bags and vigorous house or garden work, to improve your health.

Try to do exercise "[snacks](#)", for example three to five short (half a minute to two minutes) bouts of activity spread across the day, such as climbing a few flights of stairs at a [high enough intensity](#) to make you a bit out of breath.

**4. I have a chronic disease, so I should avoid exercise** This is not the case. Being more active will benefit a range of chronic conditions, including cancer, heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Be as active as your condition allows, aiming for [150 minutes a week of moderate activity](#) if possible. If you have complex health needs, seek medical clearance from a doctor before you start a new exercise regime and get exercise advice from a physiotherapist or other exercise

professional.

**5. I'm too old to exercise** This is not true. [Evidence shows](#) that aging alone is not a cause of major problems until you are in your mid-90s. And strength, power and muscle mass [can be increased](#), even at this advanced age. Ideally, include aerobic exercise, balance training and muscle strengthening [if you are 65 years or older](#).

**6. Exercise will make me thin** Not necessarily. Combine calorific restriction with physical activity for more successful weight loss and remember: [you cannot outrun a bad diet](#). People who have substantial weight loss goals (over 5% of [body weight](#)) and people trying to keep a significant amount of weight off may need to do [more than 300 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity](#) to achieve their goal. Include resistance work to build lean body mass.

**7. I run once a week, but that's not enough** Rest assured that any amount of running, even once a week, results in important [health](#) benefits. If you don't have much time to exercise, even as little as 50 minutes of running once a week at a pace slower than 6mph (9.65km/h) has been shown to result in a decrease in the risk of premature death. Higher levels of running [do not necessarily improve the mortality benefits](#).

**8. I'm pregnant, so I need to take it easy** Moderate-intensity physical activity is [safe for pregnant women](#) who are generally healthy and [poses no risk to the wellbeing of the fetus](#). Physical activity [decreases the risk of excessive weight gain and gestational diabetes during pregnancy](#).

**9. I'm not feeling well, I shouldn't exercise** If you have a fever, are acutely unwell or are experiencing high levels of pain or exhaustion, don't exercise. In most other cases, being physically active is safe, but listen to your body and decrease your exercise load if you need to. And

if you can, get dressed and moving as soon as possible to avoid "[PJ paralysis](#)".

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