



Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatotic Liver Disease (MASLD): Physical Activity Recommendations

Note: These recommendations are for patients with **metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD)**, a condition which used to be called **non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD)**.

What is physical activity and fitness?

Physical activity is any kind of activity that gets your body moving.

The types of physical activity that can help you get fit and stay healthy include:

- **Aerobic or "cardio" activities:** These activities make your heart beat faster and make you breathe harder. Examples include brisk walking, riding a bike, swimming, or running. Aerobic activities make your heart and lungs stronger and build up your endurance (your ability to stay active for long periods of time).
- **Strength training activities:** These activities make your muscles work against, or "resist," something and focus on building stronger muscles and bones. Examples include lifting weights, doing push-ups, or using resistance bands.
- **Stretching activities:** These activities work on flexibility and the ability to move your joints and muscles through their full range of motion. Stretching helps you be more flexible and avoid injury (hurting yourself).

Fitness, or being "fit," means being able to do physical activity. It also means having the energy and strength to feel as good as possible. Getting even a little more fit can improve your health. You don't have to be an athlete to be fit. A brisk 30-minute walk every day can help you reach a good level of fitness. If this is hard for you, you can work toward a level of fitness that helps you feel better and have more energy.

What are the benefits of physical activity?

- Being physically active is one of the best things you can do to get fit and stay healthy. Studies have shown that increases in physical activity can help decrease the amount of fat in your liver, particularly in people who are able to lose 10% of their current body weight. Increasing your physical activity and improving your fitness is good for your heart, lungs, bones, muscles, and joints and helps improve your liver health.
- Physical fitness lowers your risk for falls, heart attack, diabetes, high blood pressure, and some cancers. If you already have one or more of these problems, getting more fit may help you control other health problems and make you feel better.
- Being more fit also can help you to sleep better, handle stress better, and keep your mind healthy.
- Increasing your physical activity, along with decreasing the number of calories you eat and drink, can help you reduce the amount of fat in your liver.

What are the key points about physical activity with MASLD?

- No single physical activity program has been proven to be more effective than another. Below are overall recommendations for increasing your physical activity level. It is most important to find activities that work for you and that you are able to do regularly.
- Even without losing a lot of weight, being more physically active has overall health benefits, including possibly decreasing the amount of fat in your liver.

How can I be more physically active?

Moderate physical activity (activities that cause your heart rate to increase) is safe for most people. It is always a good idea to talk to your primary care

doctor before becoming more active, especially if you haven't been very active or if you have health problems.

If you're ready to add more physical activity to your life, here are some tips to get you started:

- **Make physical activity part of your regular day.** Make a regular habit of using stairs, not elevators, and walking to do errands near your home.
- **Start walking.** Walking is a great fitness activity that most people can start doing. Make it a habit to take a daily walk with family members, friends, coworkers, or pets.
- **Find an activity partner.** This can make exercising more fun.
- **Find an activity that you enjoy** and stay with it. Then change it up and do other activities so you don't get bored.
- **Use interactive tools,** such as smart phone applications, pedometers, or activity trackers, to watch and record your physical activity level and find out how many calories you burn during exercise and daily activities.

How much physical activity do I need to do?

Experts recommend the goals below for physical activity duration (your goal could be one, or a combination, of these):

- Do some sort of **moderate aerobic activity**, like brisk walking, for at least 2½ hours each week. It is up to you how many days you want to exercise, but it is best to be active at least 3 days a week. Be active for at least 10 minutes at a time. For example, you could:
 - Take a 10-minute walk 3 times a day. Do this 5 days a week.
 - Take a 30-minute walk 3 days a week. On the other 4 days, take a 15-minute walk.
 - Take a 45-minute walk every other day.

- Do more **high intensity activities**, like running, for at least 1¼ hours a week. This activity makes you breathe harder and have a much faster heartbeat than when you are resting. You can spread out these 75 minutes any way you want. It is better to be active at least 3 days a week for at least 10 minutes at a time. For example, you could:
 - Run for 25 minutes, 3 times a week.
 - Run for 15 minutes, 5 times a week.

Here's an easy way to tell if your exercise is moderate: you're at a moderate level of activity if you can talk but not sing during the activity. If you can't talk while you're doing the activity, you're working too hard.

What is a healthy weight?

A healthy weight is a weight that lowers your risk for health problems. For most people, **BMI (Body Mass Index)** and waist size are good ways to tell if they are at a healthy weight. However, reaching a healthy weight isn't just about reaching a certain number. Talk with your doctor or dietitian about what weight range is best for you.

- Patients with MASLD who can lose 10% of their current body weight (through healthy eating and being physically active) have improvements in their liver health.

What are the health benefits of walking?

Walking is one of the easiest ways to get the exercise you need to stay healthy. Think of walking as an easy way to burn calories and stay fit while you go about your daily routine.

- Start with a short-term goal. For example, walk for 5 or 10 minutes every day, or increase your number of steps by 300-500 steps each day.

- After you've made walking a habit, set a longer-term goal. You may want to set a goal of walking briskly for at least 30 minutes a day or work up to 10,000 steps a day. You can try to do this 5 days a week or more.
- You can use a phone app or wear a pedometer to track your steps each day. The first time you use it, count how many steps you normally take in a day. Track your activity every day, and set a goal for increasing the number of steps each day. At first, try to add 300 to 500 steps to your day. Then work toward 2,000 more steps a day. A good long-term goal is to get to 10,000 steps a day.
- To stay motivated, find a walking partner, such as a family member, friend, or coworker. Daily dog walks are also a great way to keep up your walking routine.
- Try to add more walking into your everyday activities. Add steps in whenever you can. Examples include:
 - Taking the stairs instead of the elevator
 - Parking farther away in a parking lot so you have to walk farther to wherever you're going
 - Getting up and moving around at work once an hour
 - Walking to the grocery store, doctor appointments, work, school, or shopping whenever possible
 - Walking a lap around the grocery store before you start shopping
 - Walking during TV commercials

What are some safety tips for starting a walking program?

- Know the area that you will be walking in.
- Walk in a well-lighted, safe place.
- Carry a cell phone for emergencies.
- Wear comfortable shoes and socks that cushion your feet.
- Pay attention to the surface you are walking on. Use sidewalks and paths.

- If you usually walk outside and the weather is bad, take comfortable shoes to the mall and walk around inside the mall.
- Drink lots of water before, during, and after you are active. This is very important when it's hot outside and when you do high intensity exercise. Take a water bottle with you when you walk.

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