



## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction to 8 Steps to Fitness

### ☞ What is *8 Steps to Fitness* all About? ☞

Welcome to *8 Steps to Fitness*! You have agreed to take on a very important role for your brothers and sisters in Christ. Although we all know that our body is the temple, many of us do not get enough physical activity and we often don't eat in a healthy way. Inactivity and an unhealthy diet prevent us from keeping our body and our temple strong and healthy. This 8-week program is designed to help people learn why physical activity and healthy nutrition are so important and to develop the skills needed to adopt a healthier lifestyle. It is based on other programs that have been shown to be effective in increasing physical activity and improving nutrition in African Americans.

By the end of the 8-week program, the physical activity goal for participants in your groups is to take part in 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity (e.g., walking) on at least 5 days of the week. The nutrition goal is to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day and decrease portion sizes and dietary fat. Healthy habits have been shown to reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, hypertension, obesity, and certain types of cancer. Healthy habits are also important for improving mental health and overall quality of life. Even among people who have one or more of these health conditions, physical activity and proper nutrition can help to control the conditions and prevent further complications. It is also to help remember that people of all ages benefit from physical activity.

The topics of this 8-week program are:

- Week 1: Basics of Physical Activity
- Week 2: Basics of Healthy Eating
- Week 3: Self-Monitoring and Weighing the Pros and Cons of Change
- Week 4: Goal Setting and Self-reward
- Week 5: Overcoming Barriers
- Week 6: Enlisting Social Support and Stress Management
- Week 7: Creating a Healthy Environment
- Week 8: Relapse Prevention and Course Review

## ☞ How Do I Facilitate the Sessions? ☞

This guide will provide a step-by-step map to facilitating *8 Steps to Fitness*, which should include eight to ten participants. You will notice that each week is organized in a similar way. We suggest that you take approximately 60 minutes to go through the content of the session, and up to another 30 minutes for group physical activity. The session should not exceed 90 minutes. Each week includes:

- Physical Activity - Each session will begin with 10 minutes of aerobic physical activity. You can use the tapes/CDs or videotapes we provide to get people moving. You might consider other activities as well, such as walking. At the beginning of the 8-week program, you'll also end the session with another 10 minutes of physical activity. By week 3, you'll increase the physical activity at the end of the session to 15 minutes, and eventually to 20 minutes. It is very important that you do not leave out this part of the session! At first, some people will have difficulty doing 10 minutes of physical activity. Encourage people to work at their own pace and to do what they can.
- Prayer and Scripture - After the physical activity session and an opening prayer, you will have a scripture to read to the group. This scripture was chosen because it is related to the topic for that session or because it relates to health and wellness in general. Ask group members to react to the scripture and discuss what it means to them.
- Teaching Material - A structured guide to each session is provided in this book. Typically you will start the session by asking participants to talk about the prior week's "homework" and how it went and what they learned. You will then use the "Teaching Content" material to go through each of the topics for that session. The information outlined in the "Teaching Content" section provides you with the "how to" information you'll need to facilitate the group. We provide some suggestions for how to get people to start talking about the topic. We also provide suggestions for how much time to spend on each topic.
- Participant Handouts - These handouts will help participants learn and remember important information. Before the group, make sure you have copies of the handouts for everyone. The handouts are included in this guide. We have provided an unbound copy of all the handouts in this binder to make copying easier. For many of the participant handouts, there are also facilitator guides to the handouts,

which provide examples for you to use. You can download these handouts from the website at [www.health-e-ame.com](http://www.health-e-ame.com), through the Physical Activity Programs link, Health Director's, 8 Steps to Fitness Participant handouts.

- Homework - It is important that group members think about their physical activity and healthy nutrition between sessions. For each session, there is a "Homework" section in which participants are asked to keep track of something or try something during the week. After the session on goal setting and self-monitoring, participants will be asked to set and evaluate a goal each week. They will also be asked to keep a simple log to keep track of their physical activity and nutrition habits throughout the rest of the program.
- Closing the Session - Before sending your group home, be sure that you complete the recommended physical activity reinforce the time and place the group will meet again, and let group members know what the next week's topic will be. It is also important to remind the participants to be active through the week.

### ☞ What is My Role During the Sessions? ☞

You play a critical role in the sessions, but don't feel overwhelmed. You should view yourself as the guide or facilitator. Don't feel pressure to be a "leader," "instructor," or "teacher. You are there to guide discussion, keep things moving along, offer support and encouragement, and at times teach people information or skills. Most of the time others in the group will be doing the talking. You are someone who facilitates an important process.

### ☞ How Do I Know if it is Safe for People to be Physically Active? ☞

For the vast majority of people, physical activity or exercise that is done at a moderate intensity is safe. In fact, being a couch potato is a health risk! A good example of moderate intensity activity would be brisk walking for someone who is relatively healthy. However, the definition of "moderate intensity" depends on a person's condition. For people who are overweight, have health problems, or are older and inactive, lighter forms of activity can be moderate intensity. We don't recommend vigorous physical activity like jogging without medical approval.

Before you accept a participant into the 8-week program, it is important that he or she complete a health screening form. This screening form is included in this guide. Do not accept people into the program who do not “pass” this screening. If you aren’t sure about a person’s safety, ask him/her to see their physician before starting. It is important that participant safety be a high priority. Be sure to keep a copy of this signed screening form for all of your participants.

You can also help to ensure participant safety by encouraging participants to “start low and go slow.” That is, start activity at a low level, and gradually build up duration, frequency, and intensity over time. Also, encourage people to take the physical activities at their own pace. Finally, during the first session, you will review signs and symptoms of danger.

### **☞ What are Some Important “Dos” and “Don’ts” ☞**

You have probably chosen to lead this group because you like to help people. Thus, you probably already have the most important skills of a good facilitator. You are probably warm, encouraging, and genuinely concerned about others. These attributes and skills will go a long way toward helping others. Sometimes those of us who like to help others also like to give advice. While advice can be useful at times, sometimes it is more effective to empower others to find their own solutions. We suggest that advice be used as a “last resort” in these groups. Try to ask questions and use the group process to get people to come up with their own solutions and strategies.

Here are some other “dos” and “don’ts” to keep in mind.

Dos:

- Ask open-ended questions such as “Can you tell me more about...?” or “What ideas do you have for how to overcome this barrier?” Open-ended questions often get people to give rich and detailed responses.
- Provide support and encouragement for successes and success attempts (even if they didn’t work out). Becoming more active and eating better is difficult, and encouragement can go a long way toward helping people stay motivated!
- Show interest in participants’ successes and struggles.
- Encourage everyone in the group to participate. You can try saying things like, “Mrs. Jones, I haven’t heard from you tonight. I’m really interested in hearing what you have to say about your barriers to being active.”

- Keep the discussion on track. It is inevitable that there will be times when the group goes off on an unrelated discussion. That's ok, but try to bring them back to the topic at hand. For example, you might say, "OK, let's get back to our discussion about physical activity." Or you can say, "It seems like many of you are interested in discussing X topic, but I'm wondering if we might discuss this after our session."
- Encourage regular attendance. It is difficult to have a close-knit group if people do not show up. Consider calling people who did not attend the session to "check in" with them.
- Start and end sessions on time. Emphasize the importance of arriving on time.
- Enter each session prepared. **Be sure you have reviewed the session materials in detail and are prepared to facilitate the group.**
- If snacks are provided at the sessions, make sure that healthy, low-fat alternatives are included.

#### Don'ts:

- Don't ask closed-ended questions. These are questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no," such as, "Does your family support your healthy nutrition choices?" Closed-ended questions end discussion and prevent elaboration. (An open-ended question to use instead would be "What role does your family play in your nutrition choices?")
- Don't be a "know it all" or too quick to give advice. You may think you have the perfect solution for the participant who is struggling, and by giving advice you are undoubtedly intending to be helpful. However, when people are struggling with difficult changes, being told what to do often is not helpful. People often respond with "yes .... but" or may become more resistant to change. Instead, ask participants for things they might try to overcome their struggle. Or ask the participant if she or he would like to hear ideas from the group. Also recognize that some barriers or problems can't be solved in a session, and some people may not be ready to make changes at this time, and that's ok.
- Don't make people feel guilty if they don't meet their goals. Instead, express your understanding of how difficult change can be, and encourage participants to discuss their struggles and seek support from the group.
- Don't dominate discussion. Remember that you are the guide and your major role is to facilitate discussion.

## ☞ Technical Assistance ☞

If you have any questions about the 8 Steps to Fitness program, please contact Melissa Bopp at (803)576-6381 or Lottie McClorin at (803)777-2864, or send your questions by email to, [sphAME@gwm.sc.edu](mailto:sphAME@gwm.sc.edu).

*Be sure to check out resources available online at [www.health-e-ame.com](http://www.health-e-ame.com), Physical Activity Programs link, Health Director's Page.*

## ☞ Make it Fun! ☞

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, have fun! If you are having fun, others in the group will also be having fun. Becoming more active and eating healthier need not be "painful" or dull. Make it fun, interesting, and challenging! And know that you are doing important work for your community and the Lord.



## Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire Facilitator Screening Tool

To ensure that all of the participants that want to participate in the *8 Steps to Fitness* will have an enjoyable, fun, and safe time, it is important to check that they are eligible to participate in a physical activity program. The Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q) asks participants about a number of conditions that could make it unsafe for them to participate in this type of physical activity program. **Please be sure that all participants have read and signed the PAR-Q. You must keep a signed copy of the PAR-Q, and provide him or her with a copy.** If a participant can't read, please read each question to him or her.

If participants answer NO to all of the PAR-Q questions, then they are ready to begin the *8 Steps to Fitness* program.

If participants answer YES to any of the PAR-Q questions, then they will need to be further screened before participating in the *8 Steps to Fitness* Program.

- If they answer YES to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 8 they **ARE NOT ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE** in the program. It is not safe for them to participate in a medically unsupervised program.
- If they answer YES to questions 6 or 7 then they will need to provide you with more information about their condition to ensure their safety while participating in the *8 Steps to Fitness* program. Ask the following questions if they answered YES to questions 6 or 7.
  - In the last three months, has your doctor made any adjustments to your medications?
    - YES or NO
      - If YES, then they are considered to be unstable. It is unsafe for them to participate in the *8 Steps to Fitness* program, and they are therefore not eligible. If NO, then ask the next question.
  - With medication and/or diet is your blood pressure/blood sugar values within the normal range?
    - YES or NO
      - If YES, then they are eligible to participate in the *8 Steps to Fitness* program. If NO, then they are considered to be unstable, and it is unsafe for them to participate in the program.
- Provide the participant with the appropriate participant handout with safety tips for their condition.
  - Safety Tips for Physical Activity Participation with Diabetes or High Blood Pressure

If participants were unstable and not eligible to participate, encourage them to participate the next time *8 Steps to Fitness* is offered, when their condition is stable.



**Physical Activity Readiness  
Questionnaire**  
Participant Copy

Regular physical activity is fun and healthy, and increasingly more people are more active every day. Being more active is very safe for most people. However, some people should check with their doctor before they start becoming much more physically active. If you are planning to become much more physically active than you are now, start by answering the questions below. **If you are over 69 years of age, and you are not used to being very active, check with your doctor before starting a physical activity program.** Please read the questions carefully and answer each one honestly. Check YES or NO.

- | Yes                      | No                       |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition <u>and</u> that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. In the past month, have you had any chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Is your doctor currently prescribing any drugs (for example water pills) for your blood pressure or heart condition?                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Has a doctor ever told you that you have diabetes?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Do you know of <u>any other reason</u> why you should not do physical activity?   |

If you answered NO to all of the questions, you are ready to start the *8 Steps to Fitness* Program. If you answered YES to any of the questions, please see the program facilitator.

I have read, understood and completed this questionnaire.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Facilitator please keep a signed copy for your records



## Program Overview

### Participant Handout

Your body is the temple. Physical activity and good nutrition are two of the most important things you can do to keep the temple healthy and strong. *8 Steps to Fitness* is an 8-week program designed to provide you with the knowledge and skills needed to increase your physical activity and improve your eating habits. Each week you will meet as part of a group for approximately 90 minutes.

### Program Goals:

- By the end of the program, you will be taking part in 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity (e.g., brisk walking) on 5 or more days of the week. You can do your 30 minutes all at once, or in bouts of 10 or 15 minutes.
- By the end of the program, you will be eating at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetable (2 fruits, 3 vegetables) each day.
- By the end of the program, you will have decreased dietary fat and portion sizes.

### The topics for the 8-weeks are:

Week 1: Basics of Physical Activity

Week 2: Basics of Healthy Eating

Week 3: Self-Monitoring and Weighing the Pros and Cons of Change

Week 4: Goal Setting and Self-reward

Week 5: Overcoming Barriers

Week 6: Enlisting Social Support and Stress Management

Week 7: Creating a Healthy Environment

Week 8: Relapse Prevention and Course Review



## Program Expectations & Contract

Participant Copy

Each of the 8 sessions will include group physical activity in addition to group discussion, so dress comfortably. This program is focused on healthy lifestyles, and not weight loss per se. Even if you don't lose any weight, increasing physical activity and improving your eating habits have important health outcomes.

In order to make this 8-week program successful for everyone, there are a number of expectations. These include:

- You are expected to attend each session. It is important that you call the group facilitator if you are unable to attend a session.
- You are expected to arrive to each session on time.
- You are expected to participate in discussions.
- You are expected to complete "homework" outside of group sessions. These exercises are a critical part of the 8-week program.
- You are expected to be open and honest in discussing your struggles and your successes. Making lasting changes is not easy, and you are not expected to be perfect! We often learn the most from our struggles and challenges.
- You are expected to be respectful, supportive, and accepting to others in the group. This does not mean you have to agree with what others say, but we ask that you share your disagreement in ways that respect others.
- You are expected to participate in physical activity at a pace that is comfortable for you. No two people will start at the same exact level of fitness, and that's ok. It is important to gradually increase your physical activity over time to prevent injury.
- You are expected to dress appropriately for participating in physical activity, including comfortable, safe footwear.
- You need to be aware of any signs or symptoms of health problems, and consult your health care provider if they increase in frequency or severity.

I agree to these expectations

---

Participant signature

Date

Note: Facilitator please keep a signed copy for your records



## Safety Tips for Participation with Diabetes or High Blood Pressure

Almost everyone is able to enjoy the benefits of being more physically active at a low to moderate level, however some people with certain health conditions must be extra careful to make sure that their physical activity program will be fun and safe.

If you **have high blood pressure or diabetes**, there are some things that you need to know before beginning the *8 Steps to Fitness* program.

- Keep in contact with your healthcare provider, and let them know that you are starting a physical activity program.
- Avoid exercising in the extreme heat, humidity, and cold.
- Carry identification that says you have diabetes if you are active away from home.
- Drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after your physical activity.
- Don't participate in vigorous intensity activities such as jogging. Stick to more low and moderate intensity activities, such as brisk walking.
- Be aware of any unusual symptoms with physical activity, and inform your healthcare provider about them: bad headaches, dizziness, or lightheadedness.
- Don't push yourself beyond your comfort level. Work at your own pace.

### For People with Diabetes

- Be aware of the timing of your meals with your physical activity. The best time to be active is 1 hour after a meal. Try to do your physical activity the same time every day.
- You should always have a high carbohydrate snack with you, just in case your blood sugar drops too low. Try: hard candies, fruit juice, regular (not diet) soda, milk, or peanut butter and crackers.
- Avoid physical activity in the evening. The combination of activity and not eating through the night can cause your blood sugar to drop too low.
- Always wear the proper footwear when being physically active. Make sure that your shoes are sturdy and supportive, and your socks are cotton, lightweight and breathable. Check your feet for blisters, cuts, and scrapes after your activity session.

### For People with High Blood Pressure

- Try not to be physically active immediately after taking your blood pressure medication.
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially if you are taking a "water-pill" (diuretic). You can become dehydrated quickly when taking blood pressure medications, so it is important to drink fluids, even if you're not thirsty.
- Don't hold your breath while you are exercising, or lifting and pushing heavy objects.

Following these simple tips can ensure that you will get the most benefits from being physically active, and stay safe.

