Stride

KEEP ON MOVING | WELLNESS GUIDE | RESEARCH-BACKED

Join the Movement

A virtual fitness challenge guide: simple workouts you can do anywhere, and the research on why moving together works.

A four-week challenge, a no-equipment workout plan and the science of steps, short bursts and social support, all in one guide you can share with your people.

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Accountability. Family. Fitness.

CHAPTER 1

Three Time Zones, One Group Chat

> Marcus, 45, used to be the athlete of his friend group. Now his friends are scattered across three time zones and the most he exercises is a sprint to a meeting room. One Sunday he typed into the group chat: “Four weeks. Twenty minutes a day. Anywhere. Who’s in?”
>
> By Monday morning there were six names. By Friday there were photos: a living-room plank, a stair climb in a hotel, a walk in the rain with the caption “day 4, still here.” Nobody was fast. Everybody was *there*.

This guide gives you a four-week virtual fitness challenge you can run with friends, family or colleagues, along with the research behind it so you know *why* every piece is built the way it is.

CHAPTER 2

Why Moving Matters, and How Little It Can Take

A landmark analysis in *The Lancet* by I-Min Lee and colleagues estimated that physical inactivity was responsible for about 9% of premature deaths worldwide, more than 5.3 million of 57 million deaths in 2008 [1].

The good news is how generously the body responds. The World Health Organization’s 2020 guidelines recommend 150–300 minutes of moderate activity a week (or 75–150 minutes of vigorous activity), plus muscle-strengthening on two or more days, and they stress that *all activity counts*, with no minimum bout length [2]. A pooled analysis of leisure-time activity by Hannah Arem and colleagues found that people who did some activity but less than the guideline already had a roughly 20% lower mortality risk than inactive people, and those who met the minimum had about 31% lower risk [3].

Steps

A meta-analysis of 15 international cohorts (47,471 adults) led by Amanda Paluch found that risk of death fell progressively as steps rose: about 53% lower in the most active quarter (median roughly 10,900 steps a day) than in the least active (roughly 3,550), with benefits levelling off around 6,000–8,000 steps a day for adults 60 and over and 8,000–10,000 for younger adults [4]. The mythical 10,000 is not a magic threshold.

3 min

Researchers led by Emmanuel Stamatakis at the University of Sydney followed 25,241 non-exercisers in UK Biobank who wore activity trackers. Those who did about three short bursts a day of vigorous effort during daily life (each lasting one to two minutes, such as hurrying up stairs) had a 38–40% lower risk of death from any cause than those who did none. This was observational, so it shows association, not proof [5].

CHAPTER 3

Why Doing It Together Works

In a controlled study of 166 adults, psychologists Rena Wing and Robert Jeffery recruited people either alone or with three friends or family members, and then gave some groups extra social-support strategies. Among those who joined alone, 76% completed the program and 24% fully maintained their weight loss. Among those recruited with friends and given social support, 95% completed and 66% maintained their weight loss [6].

Earlier, we saw that stronger social relationships were linked with a 50% greater likelihood of survival across 148 studies [7]. Community is not decoration. It is part of the dose. To be fair, research that specifically tests *online* fitness challenges is still emerging, so the case for a virtual format rests on the social-support research above rather than on a single definitive trial.

CHAPTER 4

Your 4-Week Virtual Challenge

Before you start: if you have a heart or lung condition, are pregnant, are new to exercise after a long break, or take medication that affects heart rate, check with your doctor first. Use the talk test: during moderate effort you should be able to talk but not sing. Stop and seek help for chest pain, severe breathlessness or dizziness.

Week	Theme	Daily goal	Group moment
1	Show up	20-minute brisk walk (or 2,000 more steps than your usual) on 5 days; Strength Circuit A on 2 days.	Everyone posts their “why” and a Day 1 photo.
2	Build	Same walks, plus 3 one-minute “power bursts” (stairs, fast walking) each day [5]; Circuit A, 3 rounds.	Share your best burst location.
3	Strengthen	Walk 25–30 minutes on 4 days; Circuit B on 2 days; add a gentle stretch each night.	Mid-challenge video call or voice notes.
4	Celebrate	Mix and match your favourite sessions; hit your personal step goal (see below); try something new.	Finale: share before-and-after energy, sleep and mood notes.

Strength Circuit A (no equipment, about 12 minutes). Repeat 2–3 rounds, resting 30–60 seconds between rounds:

- 10 sit-to-stands from a sturdy chair (or squats)
- 8 counter-top or wall push-ups
- 10 glute bridges
- 20-second plank (knees down is fine)
- 30 seconds of marching in place or stair stepping

Strength Circuit B (about 15 minutes). Add: 8 reverse lunges per side, 10 bent-over towel rows (or backpack rows), 20-second side plank per side, and a 1-minute fast-walk burst between rounds.

Set your step goal the smart way

Check your current daily average for three days. Aim to add 1,000–2,000 steps. For most people under 60, 8,000–10,000 is a rich target; for those 60 and over, 6,000–8,000 is where the benefit curve flattens [4]. Any increase beats none.

Rules that keep the group alive

1. Make it easy to join: one shared chat, one simple tracker. **2. Celebrate effort, not speed. 3. Pair up** with an "accountability buddy" who checks in at the same time daily. **4. Missed a day? Rejoin tomorrow.** Research on habit formation shows one missed day does not derail the habit [8].

CHAPTER 5

What Happened to Marcus

> On Day 28, Marcus posted a photo of the group's combined step count. Six people had walked over a million steps together. Nobody had won. "Round two?" someone typed. Marcus smiled at his phone, the way he used to after a good game.

A quick word on the evidence

The mortality findings on steps, activity and short bursts [1,3,4,5] are observational; people who move more may differ in other ways, so these show strong associations rather than proof. The Wing and Jeffery study focused on weight loss, not fitness challenges specifically [6]. Treat this plan as a sensible, research-informed starting point.

This guide is for general education and inspiration. It is not medical advice and does not replace care from a licensed clinician or registered dietitian. Talk with your healthcare provider before making significant changes to your diet, activity or routines, especially if you are pregnant, managing a health condition, or taking medication. Characters in the opening stories are composites created for illustration; all research findings are real and cited.

SOURCES

References & Further Reading

Every number in this guide traces back to the sources below. Superscript numbers in the text match the numbered entries. Where a finding comes from observational research (which shows association, not proof of cause), we say so.

1. Lee IM, Shiroma EJ, Lobelo F, Puska P, Blair SN, Katzmarzyk PT. Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy. *The Lancet*. 2012;380(9838):219–229.
2. Bull FC, Al-Ansari SS, Biddle S, et al. World Health Organization 2020 guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. 2020;54(24):1451–1462.
3. Arem H, Moore SC, Patel A, et al. Leisure time physical activity and mortality: a detailed pooled analysis of the dose-response relationship. *JAMA Internal Medicine*. 2015;175(6):959–967.
4. Paluch AE, Bajpai S, Bassett DR, et al.; Steps for Health Collaborative. Daily steps and all-cause mortality: a meta-analysis of 15 international cohorts. *The Lancet Public Health*. 2022;7(3):e219–e228. doi:10.1016/S2468-2667(21)00302-9
5. Stamatakis E, Ahmadi MN, Gill JMR, et al. Association of wearable device-measured vigorous intermittent lifestyle physical activity with mortality. *Nature Medicine*. 2022;28(12):2521–2529. doi:10.1038/s41591-022-02100-x
6. Wing RR, Jeffery RW. Benefits of recruiting participants with friends and increasing social support for weight loss and maintenance. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. 1999;67(1):132–138.
7. Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB. Social relationships and mortality risk: A meta-analytic review. *PLoS Medicine*. 2010;7(7):e1000316. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316
8. Lally P, van Jaarsveld CHM, Potts HWW, Wardle J. How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world. *European Journal of Social Psychology*. 2010;40(6):998–1009. doi:10.1002/ejsp.674

Watch, Listen & Learn From the Experts

- **Dr. Mike Evans** (University of Toronto). Whiteboard video: *23 and 1/2 hours: What is the single best thing we can do for our health?* (2011).
- **Emmanuel Stamatakis, PhD** (University of Sydney, Charles Perkins Centre). Interviews on vigorous intermittent lifestyle physical activity (VILPA).
- **I-Min Lee, MBBS, ScD** (Harvard Medical School / Brigham and Women's). Talks and interviews on steps and longevity.
- **World Health Organization**: Physical activity fact sheet and 2020 guidelines, at who.int.