

Physical deconditioning

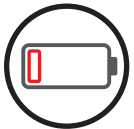
What do you mean I'm out of shape?

For many of us, working from home during the pandemic means we have had more stress and less physical activity.

Physical changes due to less activity and added stress can include:



Reduced muscle strength | People lose 1-3% of muscle strength per day (bit.ly/3x3KdEt) with sedentary behavior.



Reduced cardiovascular fitness | Less blood pumping means the body gets fatigued more quickly.



Reduced physical endurance | When the working muscle and tissue get less oxygen, lactic acid can build up, resulting in muscle fatigue and soreness.



Reduced range of motion (ROM) | Less elasticity and muscle stiffness from weeks of reduced activity.



Increased whole-body fatigue | Muscles need to be retrained as workers get used to the physical demands of their job.



Weight gain | By reducing daily physical activity, you burn fewer calories.



Soft-tissue injuries are the most common injury when a deconditioned body resumes physical activity — whether for the job or for an exercise program.



Increased stress | Fear of illness, financial concerns, changed family responsibilities, changed routines.



Chronic stress disrupts nearly every body system.

What can I do now?

Experiencing some minor soreness is normal as your body gets used to more physical activity. But be careful not to overdo it, because that can lead to an injury. Here are a few ways to make physical reconditioning easier:

- The best way to reverse deconditioning is with exercise.
 - Start slowly
 - Exercise consistently with at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily.
 - Gradually increase intensity.
- Find ways that work to lower stress. There's lots of healthy ways to cope with stress and it's best to find what works for you. Regular exercise, even for just 15 minutes a day, helps.
- Take breaks. Remember to drink plenty of water.
- Think about nutrition; limit processed foods.
- Ease into work if possible, and don't work extra hours until your stamina has improved.
- Analyze your workstation for ergonomics and supplies, and improve the space where possible.
- Review standard operating procedures. Make sure resources are up to date, and note changes that may have occurred.

How quickly does "deconditioning" happen?

The general rule is "use it or lose it," but it depends on fitness level, age, length of the inactivity, and the reason for the inactivity. Getting back into shape usually takes about twice as long as it took to get out of shape.