



MAINTAINING YOUR HEALTH

A Guide to Staying in Shape While in Prison

The benefits of maintaining your health while in prison are substantial. It keeps you mentally healthier, reduces the need for medical care, and reassures family and friends to know that you're taking good care of yourself. You will live a longer, happier and healthier life if you take some steps toward improving your body now. There is also a tremendous benefit to society when not only inmates, but all people, take better care of themselves, in that it reduces the burden on taxpayers for health care costs. Taking care of yourself is a win for you, your loved ones and even society. Here's what we suggest!

HEALTH TIPS

While we realize that your diet, movements, and more can be restricted, try to follow these tips as best you can. Some institutions will provide more options than others.

- When possible, use healthy oils, such as olive oil and canola oil, in your diet.
- Try to include fresh fruits and/or vegetables in your meals. Wash thoroughly to rinse any lingering pesticides or other chemicals.
- Avoid processed foods, soda, and high fructose foods.
- Get 7-8 hours of sleep. Lack of sufficient sleep has been associated with many ailments. Calm yourself before bed and allow ample time to fall asleep. Some good news is working out actually promotes better sleep.
- Stay positive and focus on the good! Depression has a physical as well as a mental impact on your body.
- Try to eat healthy proteins and carbohydrates in each meal. Poultry, fish, beans, and nuts are a good source of protein. Whole grains such as brown rice, whole wheat bread, and whole grain pasta are excellent sources of carbohydrates.
- Stay active within your institution. Look for a job that gives you the most personal reward, attend classes, and engage your mind by playing challenging mental games, such as chess, with other inmates.
- If you have access to purchase them, you may want to consider taking a multivitamin and mineral complex daily. These should be taken with a full glass of water in the morning.



*It is health that is real
wealth and not pieces of
gold and silver.*

- Mahatma Gandhi



Some inmates are already in amazing physical shape. This part of the guide probably is not for them. However, it is a great starter guide for someone looking to get in shape.

WORKOUT GUIDE

All workouts need to start with a warm-up. Warming up gets blood circulating to our muscles, which helps prevent injury. When you train cold muscles, you also have a limited range of motion, limited energy, and limited endurance. Warming up also helps us begin to release endorphins and gets us ready for a good workout! After a good warmup, you're ready for the workout. This workout is for beginners. It can be done with no equipment and is based on a seven-day routine.

WARMUP EXERCISES

WARMUP 1

Run in Place

Do this for about 2-3 minutes.

WARMUP 2

Bodyweight Squats

Squat shallow and keep your bodyweight on your back heels. Do three sets of 10-15 repetitions.

WARMUP 3

Cross Toe Touches

Standing, touch the toes of your foot with the opposite hand, slightly squatting each time that you reach downward. Do three sets of 15 touches to each foot (30 total per set).

WARMUP 4

Front Kicks

Keeping your kicking leg in the back, kick it forward while keeping your midsection tight. Don't kick hard. This is about warming up your body, not breaking boards. Do 10-15 repetitions with each leg for 3 sets.

WARMUP 5

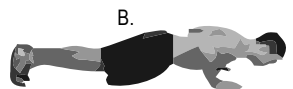
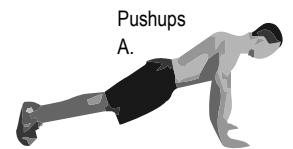
Arm Circles

Standing erect, hold your arms out to your side. Spin them forward for 30 repetitions. Now switch the rotation and spin them backward for 30 repetitions.

DAY 1

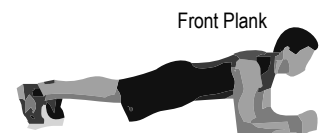
Push-ups: 3-5 sets of 5-20 repetitions

Everyone knows what a push-up looks like, but not everyone knows how to do a push-up properly. As with any exercise, form is crucial. Place your hands slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. Your feet should be positioned wherever they are most comfortable. For some, this means feet are together; for others feet are slightly apart. Keep your body as straight as possible. Your head should be looking slightly forward, not facedown; this helps keep your body inline. With your arms straight, core and gluteal muscles engaged, lower your body toward the ground until your elbows are 90 degrees or smaller. Be sure to keep your elbows close to your body. Once your arms are 90 degrees or lower, pause for a moment and then push back up.



Front Planks: 3-5 sets of 1 minute each

Planks are a deceptively simple exercise that strengthen your core, lower back, and shoulders. To do a proper plank, start with your body in a push-up position and your elbows bent 90 degrees so you are resting on your forearms. Keep your elbows directly below your shoulders and your body in a straight line. Hold this position for one minute. To intensify the exercise, widen your stance and brace yourself with your hands, in full push-up position, instead of your forearms.



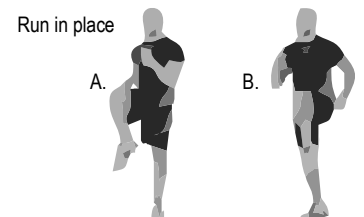
Bent-Knee Sit-up / Crunches: 3-5 sets of 15-60

Crunches are a great exercise not only for building strong abdominal muscles but also for improving balance. Start by lying flat on your back, knees bent and your feet hip-width apart on the floor. Place your thumbs behind your ears and fingers resting lightly on either side of your head. Contrary to popular belief, you should not lock your fingers behind your head. Pushing the small of your back into the floor and engaging your abdominal muscles, tilt your chin slightly toward your chest so that your head, neck and shoulder blades roll off the floor. Hold this position for a moment before lowering back down.



Run in Place: 5-15 minutes

Running in place is a fabulous way to burn calories and lose weight. Start by lifting your feet only an inch or so off the ground. Let your arms swing naturally, as if you were distance running. The more you move your body the more calories you will burn. As you get comfortable, lift your knees higher and increase your speed. This will elevate your heart rate and intensify your workout. Maintain the intensity as long as you can, allowing for slower, recovery periods when needed. Run in place for at least five minutes.



DAY 2

Rest day. It's important to incorporate days off into your workout routine to allow your body to recover. While you're resting, your body begins to rebuild muscle fibers that are broken down during the workout. It also helps your muscles adapt to the stress of the workout, which helps to avoid injury and build strength over time. This is a good day to do something fun and stimulating, such as playing basketball or chess, or doing some reading. It's also a good opportunity to improve your state of mind with meditation.

Additional Resource! If you've never meditated before, our Stress Reduction and Anger Management Self-help Guide can get you started.

Get your
FREE COPY

SEND A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE TO*:

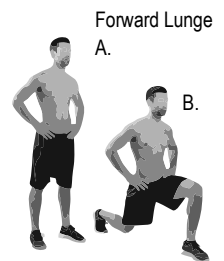
WriteAPrisoner.com
Stress Reduction and Anger Management Self-help
P.O. Box 10
Edgewater, FL 32132 USA

* Prison staff or pen-pals can also print this guide at
<http://www.writeaprisoner.com/self-help>

DAY 3

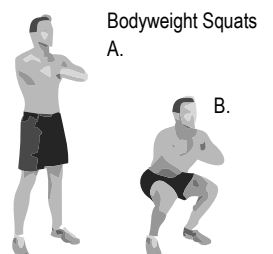
Forward Lunge: 3-5 sets of 10-15 repetitions per leg

Forward lunges will work your quads, glutes, & hamstrings while improving your balance. To do a forward lunge, begin standing tall, shoulders back, with your feet about 6-inches apart and your core muscles engaged. Step forward with one leg about two feet, lowering your body so your front leg is parallel to the floor. Focus on driving your hips downward while keeping your shoulders back and your back straight. Pause for a moment before pushing back and returning to standing position. Repeat with other leg to complete one set.



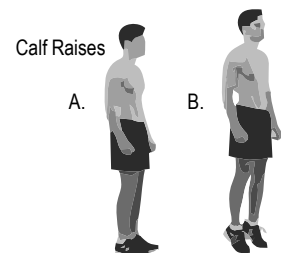
Bodyweight Squats (warmups don't count): 3-5 sets of 20-30 repetitions

Bodyweight Squats are a great way to tone your lower body. To begin, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. You can extend your arms straight out in front of you, place them behind your head, or cross your arms and place your hands on your shoulders. Slowly bend your knees while keeping your feet flat on the floor, sitting back with your hips. Be sure to keep your chest out, your back as straight as possible, and your gaze straight ahead. When your thighs are parallel to the floor, return to standing position to complete one rep.



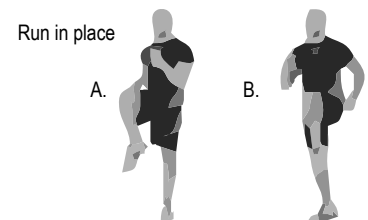
Calf Raises: 3-5 sets of 10-15 repetitions

If you have something to stand on, such as the edge of a step, you can do this exercise there. Place the balls of your feet on the edge with your heels hanging off. Otherwise, standing directly on the floor will still give you a good calf workout. From a standing position, engage your core muscles and tuck your tail bone. Keeping your legs straight and your knees in place, slowly rise up to the balls of your feet. Hold briefly then come back down.



Run in Place: 5-15 minutes

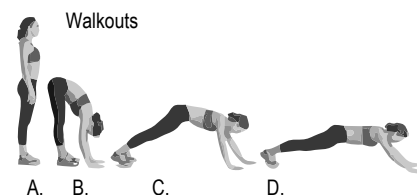
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DAY 4

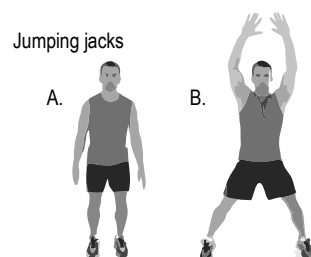
Walkouts: 3-5 sets of 10 repetitions

Walkouts are a great upper body exercise that focuses on your core. As with any core exercise, walkouts will improve balance and stability. To begin, stand with your feet hip width apart. Bend forward from your hips toward your toes and place your hands on the ground. Bend your knees slightly if needed. Walk your hands out in front of you to a push-up position. Hold the plank for a few moments, then walk your hands out a few more inches so they are in front of your head. Again, hold this position for a few moments before returning to push-up position. Remember to keep your core muscles engaged and your back straight. Then walk your hands back to your feet and return to standing position. This is one repetition.



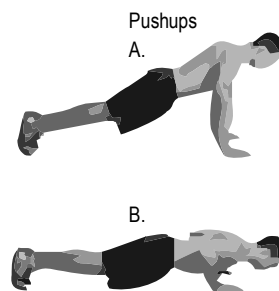
Jumping Jacks: 3-5 sets of 15-20 repetitions

Jumping jacks not only give you a great cardio workout, but they are a great all over body exercise. Most everyone is familiar with jumping jacks, but like any exercise, it's important to use good form to avoid injury. To do a proper jumping jack, start with your feet together and your hands by your side. In a single motion, jump your feet out to the side and raise your arms over your head. Be sure to land softly with your feet slightly turned out to avoid putting unnecessary strain on the knees. Immediately jump your feet back together and lower your arms to your side. This is one repetition.



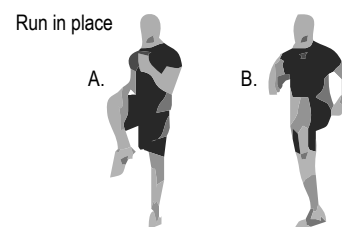
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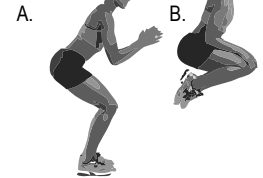
Rest Day

DAY 6

Tuck Jump: 3-5 sets of 5-10 repetitions

Jumping is a great way to improve flexibility in your legs and strengthen your circulatory system. To do a tuck jump, stand with your knees slightly bent. Jump into the air as high as possible, bringing your knees toward the chest and using your arms to gain momentum. Be sure to land softly with your knees bent and your feet under your hips. The intensity of this workout depends on the speed of the exercise and how much you bring your knees to your chest.

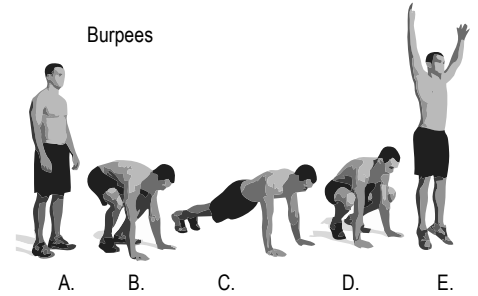
Tuck Jump



Burpees: 3-5 sets of 10-15 repetitions

When you want a full body workout, burpees are one of the most effective bodyweight exercises to get the job done. Start in a standing position with your feet shoulder-width apart. Lower your body to a squat and place your hands firmly on the floor in front of you. Kick your feet back straight behind you to a push-up position. From here, lower your chest and do a push-up. Immediately after the push-up, jump your feet back to their original squatting position, and in a single motion, launch your body straight up, jumping a few inches off the floor and raising your arms above your head. This is one rep. Burpees can be exhausting, especially for beginners. If you find yourself needing a little extra help, eliminate the jump between repetitions or try walking your feet back to the squatting position after the push-up.

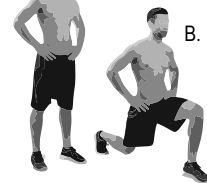
Burpees



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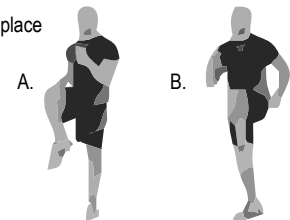
Forward Lunge
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Run in place



DAY 7

Rest day.

Congratulations! Your workout week is complete! Repeat this routine each week. Over time you will notice these exercises get easier. As you progress, add more sets and repetitions and/or increase speed in cardiovascular exercises. This will help maintain a level of intensity and ensure a good full body workout.

Workout Tips

- In the beginning, working out can make the best of us a little self-conscious. It may be hard to find privacy in prison, but initially working out in your cell may be easier for you than working out in the gym or on the yard for instance.
- Workouts are meant to be intense, but you do not want to push yourself to failure. You should always have another repetition or two in you when you are done.
- Each repetition you do should be absolutely perfect. That might not be a request any of us can meet, but you should be working your absolute hardest to make each repetition as perfect as possible.
- Whether or not you have any pre-existing medical problems, you should always speak to your doctor before beginning a new workout routine.
- Stretching can also help with your overall health and mental wellbeing. Stretching can improve muscle tone, reduce cramping and increase elasticity. Multiple stretching exercises should be used to gain the full effects of stretching. It is critical that you always use excellent form when stretching or performing any of the exercises above. Slow, controlled movements are essential.
- You want to keep a good pace between each set. Keeping your heartrate elevated and avoiding resting periods which last too long helps improve cardiovascular health and accelerates fat burn.
- Listen to your body to avoid injury. If something doesn't feel right, back off. Never push through pain. Stop training and consult a doctor. Not listening to our bodies is one of the most common ways we get hurt.
- Stay hydrated during your workout. Dehydrated muscles can get hurt much easier. When we workout, we perspire and lose water. It is essential that you stay hydrated.
- Keep track of your progress in a workout log. This will help you set new goals.
- Try to keep your workouts between 30-40 minutes. More time than that working out can be wasted time. Your best results will be achieved in that 30-40 minute window.
- Working out in your cell can be disruptive to cellmates. Grunting and sweating are common elements of a workout. If you have a cellmate, keep this in mind when working out. Better yet, invite him or her to join you in the workout!

"Physical activity can improve health. People who are physically active tend to live longer and have lower risk for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression, and some cancers. Physical activity can also help with weight control, and may improve academic achievement in students."

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/data/facts.htm>

Success story or suggestion? We want to know what worked for you so we can share it with other inmates.
If you have a suggestion to make about this resource, please do so at:
Self-help Suggestion - P.O. Box 10 - Edgewater, FL 32132 USA

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