Congratulations! Whether you've decided to become more physically active or to be more consistent at it, now's the time to take action.

The following suggestions may help you as you plan your action steps.

**Develop support**
Share your commitment to becoming physically active with those around you. When seeking the support of others, help them understand your reasons for change so they can help you. Make use of the support networks that exist around you, such as friends or co-workers who are willing to help you remain motivated. Find friends, co-workers or family who will join you for evening walks. Gather a group for a weekend hike and picnic. Name two people who you will rely on for support and motivation.

Getting ready for physical activity can also mean changing your surroundings (e.g., home, work, and car) to support your goals. Keep comfortable walking shoes at work or in the car. Have an exercise bag packed and ready to go. Post motivating messages in your day planner or on your bathroom mirror.

Name two ways you would like to alter your environment to support your goals.

**Find the time**
With some creative thinking, you'll find ways to squeeze a little more time out of your busy schedule. Adding short bouts of physical activity throughout the day really works. Walk down the hall instead of using the telephone or e-mail. Park farther from the door. Could you get up earlier to take a brisk walk? Climb up and down the stairs for 20 minutes during lunch?

Think about your schedule at work, home, and elsewhere. Find at least three slots that you could devote to physical activity during the next week, and write them down.

**Make change a priority**
Perhaps you've already made small changes in your level of activity that you can build on, or maybe you will be starting fresh. Either way, adding physical activity into your lifestyle is now at the top of your priority list. You can be confident that you are on the road to success. Choose one area of your life (e.g., work, lunch/break time, before/after work, weekends, active indoor chores, active outdoor chores) that you want to address in the next week.

**Create a plan of action**
You've developed a strong support network, found three time slots for physical activity, and chosen one area of your life that you want to address in the next week. The next step is to set some achievable goals and create a plan of action. For example, if you chose physical activity after work as the area to work on for the week, a specific goal might be walking the dog after work 4 days a week. Consider the plan developed by John, who makes his living as an aerospace engineer...
"I wanted to look better and was ready to make some changes to allow for physical activity. I did not know where to start, so I started small. My first goal was to be physically active in the workplace three days a week. In the morning, I'd walk to the cafeteria for coffee instead of using the vending machine near my desk. Throughout the workday whenever I wanted more coffee or a bite to eat, I would take the stairs to the basement instead of using the snack shop outside of my office. The changes were fairly simple to make. By the end of six months, I worked up to brisk walking during my lunch break five days a week and taking the stairs to get coffee or snacks. I've been able to maintain a healthier weight and I feel good. Without heroic measures, I have made significant progress."

Now it's your turn! Choose four physical activity goals that you hope to accomplish within the next month.

**Monitor your progress**
Keep in mind that occasional setbacks do not mean failure. On the contrary, you have set and achieved some specific goals. However, it is important to plan for events that might disrupt your physical activity routine. For example, if you know it will rain all week, rent a physical activity video to use in your home. Right now, make a list of potential setbacks to your routine and how you will overcome them.

It is also important to monitor your progress. Self-monitoring can help you meet your goals by increasing your awareness of the changes you have or have not made. It is also important to build on your goals. For example, if your first weekly goal is to walk to dog 30 minutes twice a week, build on this goal the following week. So, by the end of week 2, your goal will be to walk the dog 30 minutes twice a week plus gardening on Sundays. Try keeping an activity log for your daily activity.

**Reward yourself**
Celebrate! You set and achieved some specific goals. Reward yourself with a gift. Here are some ideas: a health club membership, tickets to a sporting event, a massage or a new CD.

**Use long-term vision**
Keep in mind as you are progressing that health professionals recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity at least 5 days per week. This can be your long-term goal, but for now, just keep building on your successes week by week.

Source:

This information is intended for educational purposes only, and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please consult your physician for advice about changes that may affect your health.