

30 DAYS TO FITNESS CHALLENGE

How to Make Health & Fitness
a Habit, One Day at a Time



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W E L L N E S S S E R I E S

Introduction	4
How to Use This Challenge	5
Day One: Baseline Test	6
Day #2 Glutes and Legs	7
Day #3 Core	7
Day #4 Cardio Day	8
Day #5 Mobility Day	9
Day #6 Work those Arms!	10
Day #7 Cardio Day	10
Day #8 Glutes and Legs	11
Day #9 Core	11
Day #10 Cardio	11
Day #11 Mobility Day	11
Day #12 – Arms	12
Day #13 Cardio	13
Day #14 Glutes and Legs	13
Day #15 Retest	13
Day #16 Mobility Day	13
Day #17 Core	14
Day #18 Legs.....	14
Day #19 Arms	14
Day #20 Cardio	15
Day #21 Mobility	15
Day #22 Core	16
Day #23 Cardio	16
Day #24 Legs.....	16
Day #25 Arms	17

Day #26 Cardio	17
Day #27 Mobility	17
Day #28 Core	18
Day #29 Legs.....	19
Day #30 Repeat The Baseline Test	19
Conclusion: Continuing Your Fitness After the Challenge	19

Introduction

How long does it take to make a positive change in your life? How long does it take to improve your health and well-being? The answer is that it really only takes moments to change your health for the better.

It only takes as long as you need to make the decision to take the first step toward better health.

One of the things that makes change so difficult isn't the desire or decision to get healthy, it's the planning and overwhelm that often comes next. Once you make the decision to improve your fitness, then what? What are the next steps? When do you know you've achieved success and how do you measure it?

This is the power of a 30-day challenge.



A 30-day challenge gives you a day-by-day plan. You follow the plan, take the steps that are put in place, and at the end of the month you will be able to measure your results. Most experts tell us that it takes 14-21 days to create a habit. This 30-day challenge sets you up, if you choose, to create a daily exercise habit and plan that you can continue after the 30 days. It also provides you with an abundance of tips, advice, and measurements.

All you have to do is take it one day at a time. You can do it! Today is the day you start making positive changes to your health and fitness.

How to Use This Challenge

You have 30 days of exercise, mobility, fitness tests, and tips and advice ahead of you. It's strongly recommended that you sit down every Sunday at the beginning of the week and look to the week ahead of you. There are workouts planned for you, but you also have some decisions to make.

For example, if a workout has you doing push-ups and you're unable to do a full pushup, then you'll need to identify the hardest movement you can perform to get the benefit from the movement. You might do pushups from your knees instead of from your toes. In general, there is minimal equipment required for the challenge.

Additionally, there are three days where you'll test your fitness. You'll test yourself on the first day, the 15th day and the 30th day. This test isn't designed to make you feel bad about your fitness. Quite the opposite. At the end of the month you'll see the progress you've made and the mid-challenge test will help you stay motivated – you'll be amazed at how much change can occur in just a few weeks.

A quick word on warming up and cooling down. With the exception of mobility days, please warm up your muscles before you work out, and cool them down when you're done. Sprinting with cold legs is painful and you won't get your best results. It's also good to know that as you age, you need more time to warm up. Forty-somethings need more warm up time than twenty-somethings.

Warming up for a cardio day may be something as simple as walking or jogging slowly for a few minutes. Warming up for strength days should be related to the movement. For example, if you're doing a squat/lunge workout then perform a few slow and gentle squats and lunges. Walk briskly or jog slowly for a few minutes. Get your heart rate up and your muscles warm before asking more from them.

Before we start with the first day, decide when you're going to exercise. Are you going to do it first thing in the morning or mid-day? Do you have more time and energy at the end of the day? Take a look at your personality and your reality. When are you most likely to follow through and exercise?

Remember that it takes a few weeks to create a habit. So the first week or so may be really tough. Give yourself a fighting chance at success by scheduling your exercise when you're most likely to follow through. Good? Okay, let's go!

Day One: Baseline Test

For this first day you need only to set aside about a half an hour. However, you're going to be setting your baseline for a number of movements that are good indicators of your fitness.

You're going to perform three movement tests.



#1 Pushups – The first test is to do as many pushups as you can in three minutes. You can rest as much as you need. And if you are unable to perform a strict push-up from your toes (and most people can't, so don't beat yourself up if that's the case) then do your pushups from your knees. Or start on your toes and drop to your knees when those start to fail. Record how many pushups you were able to do in three minutes, and how you performed the movement.

#2 Squats – Again, this is a three-minute test. Perform as many full-depth squats (your hips are at parallel or just below parallel with your knees) in three minutes. Take as much rest as needed. Remember to put your feet shoulder width apart and make sure your knees track over your toes when you squat so they don't cave inward. If they fall in toward the middle, it can cause knee irritation.

#3 1 Mile Walk/Jog/Run – Find a track or map a mile in your neighborhood. You can use a tool like Mapmyrun.com to get the distance from your front door and do a nice out and back run. Grab your phone or watch and time your run. Keep in mind that you're setting a baseline here, not trying for a personal record. Do your best, but don't push too hard – especially if you haven't exercised in a while. If you need to walk, then walk. Just time your mile and write it down.

You'll retest all three of these movements on the 15th and 30th day. Have fun!

Day #2 Glutes and Legs

Today you're going to work on your leg muscles. You may be a little sore from the running and squats. That's okay. You'll be able to rest those muscles tomorrow. Today...

- **30 lunges (15 each side)**
- **30 squats**

Repeat 3 times.

Day #3 Core

Plank – Hold a plank for 30 seconds with straight arms. If this is too easy, drop to your forearms.

Hollow-Rock – Lie on your back on the floor or a yoga mat. Reach your arms over your head, tighten your core muscles, and press your lower back onto the ground. Raise your legs off the ground. Hold for 30 seconds. You can adjust the difficulty by raising or lowering your legs. The lower they are to the ground, the more difficult the movement. You can also bend your knees to make it a little easier.

Repeat these two movements 5 times each.



Day #4 Cardio Day

Do 30 minutes of cardio; your choice. So you can run/walk/jog for thirty minutes. Or go for a hike. You can swim, ride a bike, jump on an elliptical or stair stepper machine or even jump rope. You can vary the intensity as well. Just keep moving for 30 minutes.

Tip: Let's talk about muscle soreness. DOMS stands for Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness. It happens when you use a muscle more or differently than it's used to. You may be feeling DOMS everywhere by now. It usually begins 24-48 hours after exercise, but the timing can vary. The best thing that you can do for DOMS is to eat nutritiously, hydrate, and get some blood circulating through your body.

Don't sit on the couch, take an ibuprofen and passively wait for it to go away. You can still exercise with DOMS, and doing so actually helps reduce the discomfort. The key is to not overdo it. Don't try for a personal record when you're dealing with significant muscle soreness. Exercise moderately.

DOMS is actually the accumulation of small muscle tears or micro-damage that happen when you work a muscle. So overdoing it can lead to injury. Get your blood circulating. Cardio day is a great way to accomplish that.



Day #5 Mobility Day

You've worked pretty hard for the past 5 days. Today is a day to work through those muscle aches and pains. It's a mobility day. Spend 20-30 minutes working on your muscles. If you have a foam roller, use it. Roll out your glutes, quad and thigh muscles, roll along the outside of your leg as well.

No foam roller? No problem.

Drop to the bottom of your squat and hold it for a minute or two. Relax into the bottom of it and rock from side to side a bit to open your hips. Stand with your feet under your hips and bend forward at the waist. Touch the floor. If you can't touch the floor, then dangle and get as much of a hamstring stretch as possible.

Quad stretch. You'll need a pad for your knee with this stretch. Place the pillow or pad against a wall. Bend your leg so that your shin is facing the wall and your knee is on the pillow. Your other leg will be positioned in front of you and bent to support you.

The ultimate goal is to be able to have your backside pressed against your foot which is against the wall. You'll feel a big hip and quad stretch. However, if you cannot reach this ideal, that's okay. Start from what feels like a good stretch for you and hold that stretch for a minute to a minute and a half. Switch legs and repeat on the other side. To get a good picture of what this is supposed to look like, search for "Death stretch" online.

Tomorrow you're going to be doing some shoulder work so let's work a bit on your shoulder mobility today.

Arm circles – Start with big arm circles going forward. Perform 10 circles forward, shrink your circle to a medium size circle and perform 10 more and then do 10 small, tight, circles. Repeat with backwards arm circles.

Pass throughs – Grab a broom or a mop or even a piece of rope. Hold the rope on both ends with your arms as wide as they'll reach. Keeping the rope or stick tight, take your arms up over your head and behind you. Bring them around and back to the front. Repeat this 30 times, gradually moving your hands in toward one another. Make sure the movement stays smooth and that both arms move together.

Do a few side bends and enjoy the rest of your day!

Day #6 Work those Arms!

Pushups – 50 Pushups – rest as needed. From toes if possible, from knees or a combination of both.

Side Plank – Sit on your left side with your legs slightly bent and your feet stacked. Place your left hand on the ground and push your hand into the ground and straighten your legs as you lift your hips off the ground. If you have trouble balancing, stagger your feet so the top leg is in front. Keeping your body tight and your arm straight, hold for 30 seconds. Switch sides. Repeat 10 times on each side.

Triceps Dip – Position your hands behind you on the stable surface, such as a bench. They should be shoulder-width apart. Bend your legs and place your feet about hip-width apart on the floor. Slowly bend at your elbows and lower your upper body down toward the floor until your arms are at about a 90-degree angle.

Keep your back close to the bench. Once you reach the bottom of the movement, slowly press your hands and push yourself straight back up to the starting position. Repeat 20 times.

Day #7 Cardio Day

Spend at least 30 minutes running, hiking, swimming or whatever sounds fun. Move your body and get your heart rate up. You should be breathing heavily, but not so much that you can't talk.

Assess Your Week: You've now put seven days into your challenge. What's working for you? What's going well? What isn't working for you and why? What changes can you make to make next week a success?

Take a look at your schedule for the upcoming week. Look ahead to the next seven days of the challenge and make sure to schedule time in your day to get it done.



Good job!

Day #8 Glutes and Legs

- **30 lunges (15 each side)**
- **30 squats**

Repeat 3 times

Tip: How hydrated are you? Did you know it's possible to be too hydrated? It can impact your performance and your health. However, most people don't drink enough. Make sure that you drink when you're thirsty and stick to water. Electrolytes and carb replacement drinks aren't necessary unless you're working out for an hour or more. They're just extra calories.

Day #9 Core

Plank – Hold a plank for 30 seconds with straight arms. If this is too easy, drop to your forearms

Hollow-Rock – Lie on your back on the floor or a yoga mat. Reach your arms over your head, tighten your core muscles, press your lower back onto the ground. Raise your legs off of the ground. Hold for 30 seconds. You can adjust the difficulty by raising or lowering your legs. The lower they are to the ground, the more difficult the movement. You can also bend your knees to make it a little easier.

Repeat these two movements 10 times.

Day #10 Cardio

Spend 45 minutes doing some type of cardio. Yes, you're adding time to your workout. Pace yourself!

Day #11 Mobility Day

Repeat Day #5 mobility exercises

Day #12 – Arms

- **Pushups** – 50 Pushups (Working to gain strength, maintain form, and if possible move toward doing a few from your toes. If you're not there yet, no worries! This is a difficult movement.)
- **Side Plank** – Hold for 30-60 seconds. Repeat 10 times on each side.
- **Triceps Dip** – Repeat 20 times.

Tip: Let's talk about calories. Often, when people start exercising or they're exercising more consistently, they find that they're hungrier. They start eating more food and consuming more calories. Unfortunately, this is why it can be difficult to lose weight even when you're exercising. If you're trying to lose weight and get in shape it's important to track what you eat.

If you eat whole foods, rather than processed foods, and you steer clear of starchy carbohydrates you're on the right track. Additionally, track calories and make sure that post workout you're not consuming more than you just burned. Exercise because it's good for you, not because it gives you a reason to justify eating an extra piece of cake.

If you want cake, eat cake but make it an occasional treat and not a daily habit. Moderation and awareness are the keys here. Pay attention to the nutrition you put into your body, avoid sugar and starchy carbs, and enjoy!



Day #13 Cardio

Spend 30 minutes on cardio. **Try intervals today.** Try 3 minutes of intense effort followed by 3 minutes of moderate effort. Repeat 5 times.

Day #14 Glutes and Legs

- **50 lunges (25 each side)**
- **50 squats**

Repeat 2 times.

Assess Your Week: You're now one day away from the half-way point! Assess. What's working for you? What's going well? What isn't working for you and why? What changes can you make to make next week a success?

Take a look at your schedule for the upcoming week. Look ahead to the next seven days of the challenge and make sure to schedule time in your day to get it done.

Tomorrow is a big day. It is your mid-point re-test. Get a good night's sleep and have fun tomorrow!

Day #15 Retest

- **Run/walk your mile**
- **3-minute pushup test**
- **3-minute squat test.** Yes, your legs will be sore from yesterday. Try to meet or exceed what you did the first day. Push yourself a bit here.

Day #16 Mobility Day

Repeat Day #5 mobility exercises

Tip: Staying motivated is tough. You're now over the hump and on your way to finishing this challenge. Two more weeks. You can do it. Think about what motivates you. Are you motivated by tracking your workouts and your results? Are you competitive? Do you enjoy working out alone or with others? Do you like music when you work out? Do you prefer to exercise outside, in your home, or in a gym?

Find what keeps you motivated. You may have started noticing changes in your body too. Possibly some external physical changes, but maybe some internal ones as well. You might have more energy, more stamina, more mental clarity or maybe you're sleeping better. Pay attention to these positive changes and hold onto them as you move through the next two weeks.

Day #17 Core

- **Plank** – Work on holding a plank for a full minute.
- **Hollow-Rock** –Work on holding for a full minute

Repeat these two movements 10 times.

Day #18 Legs

Warm up with 30 squats.

Then...

Perform 30 Jumping Squats – At the bottom of your squat jump up to full extension. Your feet should leave the ground. Land back in the bottom of your squat. You may need to perform these in sets of 3-5. And don't be surprised if you're down to singles after the first 15 or so.

Lunges – Perform 50 lunges on each side, for a total of 100.

Whew!!! Shake out those legs and enjoy your day!



Day #19 Arms

- **Pushups** – 50 Pushups (Working to gain strength, maintain form, and if possible move toward doing a few from your toes. If you're not there yet, no worries! This is a difficult movement.)
- **Side Plank** – Hold for 30-60 seconds. Repeat 10 times on each side.
- **Triceps Dip** – Repeat 30 times.

Day #20 Cardio

45 minutes of moderate intensity cardio.

Tip: Avoiding Injury – Many people are worried about getting injured when they exercise. It happens. However, you can take steps to prevent injury. For example, proper form is always a good idea. Squatting with proper form, for example, prevents knee injuries and too much soreness. When you're performing any movement, make sure your form supports you to stay healthy and free from injury.

Another way to prevent injury is to make sure that you pay attention to your body. There's a fine line between pushing yourself and pushing yourself too hard. Find that balance for yourself. Too many times people get up "*off the couch*," decide they're going to train for a marathon and go out running too long and too hard.

Know where you're starting from and what your body is capable of right now. This is one of the reasons we started the challenge with a baseline test and suggested that you didn't "race" it.

Injuries stink, so do what you can to stay healthy.

Day #21 Mobility

Repeat Day #5 Mobility movements

Assess Your Week: You're now a little more than a week away from completion! Assess. What's working for you? What's going well? What isn't working for you and why? What changes can you make to make next week a success?

Take a look at your schedule for the upcoming week. Look ahead to the next seven days of the challenge and make sure to schedule time in your day to get it done.

Day #22 Core

- **Plank** – Work on holding a plank for a full minute.
- **Hollow-Rock** –Work on holding for a full minute.

Repeat these two movements 10 times.



Day #23 Cardio

Intervals today. Aim for 3 minutes of intensity followed by 2 minutes of rest. Repeat 6 times, for a total of 30 minutes. Please don't forget to warm up and cool down. Warm up with 5 minutes of low intensity, building to moderate intensity cardio. Cool down with low intensity cardio – for example, walk for three minutes.

Day #24 Legs

- **60 lunges** (30 each side).
- **60 squats.**
- **30 calf raises** – Standing with your feet on the floor and a chair nearby for balance, raise to your toes and slowly lower back down. This helps improve ankle strength and mobility as well as calf strength.

Tip: Set goals for your workouts. If you set an intention or a goal for each workout, it can help you focus on your effort and achieve a better outcome. For example, today was a day of leg work and a lot of squats. Your goal might be to make sure every squat was perfect or that when your legs need a rest you might push yourself a bit and do one more squat.

Or if it usually takes you six minutes to get through 60, you'll push yourself and try to get it done in five. Setting goals for your workout can help you push yourself so you get a better workout. It also helps you learn what your body is capable of.

Day #25 Arms

- **Pushups – 50 Pushups** (Working to gain strength, maintain form, and if possible move toward doing a few from your toes. If you're not there yet, no worries! This is a difficult movement.)
- **Side Plank** – Hold for 30-60 seconds. Repeat 10 times on each side.
- **Triceps Dip** – Repeat 30 times.
- **Pull-ups/Chin-ups** – If you have access to a pull-up bar or playground monkey bars, give a pull-up a try. If you can't do a pull-up, try switching your grip so your palms are facing you and perform a chin-up. They're usually a little bit easier.

If pull-ups aren't happening for you, no worries. Do 10-20 jumping pull-ups. Jump up, grab the bar and pull. You use your momentum to help you get your chin over the bar. If you lower slowly and controlled, you'll build strength.

Day #26 Cardio

60 minutes of moderate intensity cardio. Keep this moderate. You should be able to maintain the same pace throughout the entire 60 minutes. If that means that you're walking briskly for an hour, then that's great.

The goal is to keep your heart rate elevated, but not at maximum effort. You should be able to hold a conversation while you exercise.

Day #27 Mobility

You've worked pretty hard for the past 5 days. Today is a day to work through those muscle aches and pains. It's a mobility day. Spend 20-30 minutes working on your muscles. If you have a foam roller, use it. Roll out your glutes, quad and thigh muscles, roll along the outside of your leg as well.

Day #28 Core

- **Plank** – Work on holding a plank for a full minute.
- **Hollow-Rock** – Work on holding for a full minute.
- **Superman** – Lie down on the floor on your stomach. Tighten your core muscles and lift your arms and legs off of the ground. Lift them as high as possible while keeping them straight. Hold for a full minute.



Repeat each of these 10 times.

- **V-Sit** – Lie on the ground and slowly raise your body and your legs at the same time until you form a V. This movement should be controlled. You'll get to a point where you cannot lift your legs anymore because your abs are screaming. Slowly lower from that point. Repeat 5 times.

Assess Your Week: Two more days until you're done! Congratulations on making it this far. Start thinking about what you can do, and what you want to do, when this challenge is over. Consider what you liked and didn't like about the challenge.

Also think about how you might reward yourself for completing the challenge. Maybe you buy yourself a new exercise outfit or a new pair of fitness shoes. Or maybe you join a gym, buy a fitness DVD or some new home gym equipment.

You now know that you have it in you to exercise every day and that rest days are still days when you spend some time on your fitness and mobility. That's a pretty significant realization. You're capable of so much!

Day #29 Legs

- **60 lunges** (30 each side).
- **60 squats.**
- **30 calf raises.**

Tip: Creating your fitness routine. As you've seen from this 30-day challenge, strength, cardio, and mobility are the three pillars of fitness and overall health. As you move beyond this challenge, think about how you can continue to fit all three into your daily lifestyle. Some programs like martial arts or CrossFit embrace all three in their daily workouts. You can also create your own fitness program. Find what works for you.

Day #30 Repeat The Baseline Test

Really push yourself for this. Try to get as many pushups in your three minutes as possible. The same for your squats. And run/walk/jog that one mile as fast as you can. Get a personal best!

Conclusion: Continuing Your Fitness After the Challenge

Take one to three days off and rest. You've earned it. But don't rest for too long. You've accomplished so much and learned a ton about yourself. If you want, repeat this 30-day challenge. You can push yourself by adding weight or modifying the days as you see fit.

Attend a boot camp, join a gym, or find a home fitness program that you enjoy. You've created a daily exercise habit, leverage that habit into a lifetime of good health and better fitness.