



Photo via [Pexels](#)

## Fitness for Addiction Survivors: How to Maintain Long-Term Health

Exercising may be the last thing you want to do if you're an addiction survivor. However, a good fitness routine can improve your chances of successful recovery and make it easier for you to cope with negative feelings. Exercise benefits your [mental health](#) and helps your body adapt to sobriety, and there are even tech advances that make working out easier. So, set some realistic goals and try adding a physical fitness routine to your recovery plan!

### Exercise Reduces Stress and Promotes Cognitive Repair

Physical [exercise](#) has the ability to increase brain volume and repair damage. Moving our muscles causes our brains to increase neuron production in key areas related to memory and

cognition. This helps addiction survivors recover key mental processes that may have been damaged with substance abuse.

Exercise also provides better blood flow to the brain, so it can function optimally. Furthermore, exercise causes our bodies to release endorphins and other neurotransmitters that [relieve stress](#) and leave us with good feelings. Plus, getting your body in shape is a sure way to build confidence!

## Regular Fitness Can Improve Your Sleep

Many addiction survivors suffer from sleep problems as their bodies adjust to a substance-free life. According to [Psychology Today](#), regular exercise can improve sleep quality by stimulating longer periods of deep, restorative sleep. This is important since addiction survivors who experience [sleep problems](#) are more likely to relapse. Avoid sleep medications that can become substitute substances for your drug. Instead, increase your sleep quality naturally with regular exercise.

## Find an Exercise that You Enjoy

Talk to your doctor before you jump into a high-intensity workout. It's possible that addiction has caused damage to your body, and intense exercise may result in injury. Instead, start with some light cardio and [low-impact workouts](#). Try out different types of exercise until you find one that you can look forward to. Some of the best types of exercise for promoting mental health are Pilates, yoga, cycling, resistance training, jogging and walking. These workouts effectively reduce anxiety and calm the brain without putting undue stress on your joints or organs.

If you're a senior, you can take advantage of your Medicare Advantage plan to [gain membership](#) to SilverSneakers, a program that gives seniors access to many fitness facilities around the country. If you're not currently enrolled in an MA plan, check out plans from Humana and other providers to find the right one for you.

## Work on Improving Your Mental Health

Though exercise is a great way to improve your mental health, there are other activities you can engage in to further promote your mental recovery. [Goodnet](#) recommends activities such as meditation, practicing gratitude, and taking on creative projects. Keeping a gratitude journal will help you focus on the positive things that happen in your life. Many people also [use meditation apps](#) as a way to reduce stress and gain control over their emotions (check out these [meditation apps](#)). Finding a [creative hobby](#) can be an outlet for emotions and give you a fulfilling way to spend free time.

## Develop a Routine and Stick to it

Without a daily routine to structure your life, your journey through recovery may be more difficult and draining than it has to be. A routine helps you form healthy habits and get through days when you have little motivation to leave your bed. This is especially useful for recovering addicts who have a hard time finding the willpower for exercise or self-improvement tasks. A [healthy routine](#) might include activities such as a morning ritual, exercise, healthy eating and relaxation. In order to stick to your routine for the long term, make yourself accountable by telling a friend or family member about your goals. It can also be helpful to create a daily to-do list to keep you on track.

Once you've established some goals, you're going to need to track them and measure your progress. Many have found a smartwatch or fitness tracker useful in pursuing goal-oriented workouts. These tools can measure calories burned and steps taken, along with tracking heart rate and sleep quality. There are many models available including the [just-out Apple Watch Series 5](#), which has always-on and [edge-to-edge display](#) and a compass built in. Another quality model is the Garmin Vivoactive 3 which stores [up to 500 songs](#) and measures your heart rate.

Going through addiction recovery is difficult for anyone. The least you can do is make it easier on yourself by practicing healthy habits like exercise and mental care activities. These healthy practices will stick with you well into the future to help you maintain sobriety and lead to long-term health!