



Physical Activity: What You Need to Know

Why Be Physically Active?

INTRODUCTION

Being physically active is good for one's overall health. "Physical activity" is anything that keeps your body moving. Physical activity can help you burn the calories you eat. It's never too late to start being active. Talk to your healthcare provider before starting any new physical activity program.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Regular physical activity can help you:

- Control your weight
- Reduce your risk of heart disease
- Reduce your risk of stroke
- Reduce your risk of high blood sugar
- Reduce your risk of some cancers
- Make your bones and muscles stronger
- Live longer
- Improve your energy and self esteem
- Decrease chances of falls for older adults
- Decrease your stress levels
- Improve your sleep

HOW MUCH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DO YOU NEED?

Being active can be easier than you think. Being physically active does not mean that you have to run a marathon. But the other extreme—little or no activity—should be avoided too. For *all* adults, some activity is better than none.

For adults age 18-64

Goal	Time Per Week	Type of Activity
For good health	2 ½ hours	Moderate intensity aerobic and muscle strengthening that work all major muscle groups*, at least 2 days a week.
		OR
For even better health or more weight loss	1 ¼ hours	Vigorous intensity aerobic and muscle strengthening that work all major muscle groups*, at least 2 days a week.
	5 hours	Moderate intensity aerobic and muscle strengthening that work all major muscle groups*, at least 2 days a week.
		OR
	2 ½ hours	Vigorous intensity aerobic and muscle strengthening that work all major muscle groups*, at least 2 days a week.

For adults age 65 or older—You can do the same as shown here if you are generally healthy, fit, and do not have any limiting chronic conditions or disabilities. Talk to your health care provider before starting any new exercise program.

*All major muscle groups includes legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms.

Doing 2 ½ hours of physical activity every week may seem like a lot, but it's not. That is about the same time as the average length of a movie. Try and spread out your activity time during the week. You can even do small amounts during the day. Every little bit contributes to the total. Be sure to do moderate or vigorous activity for at least 10 minutes at a time.

For all adults, some physical activity is better than none.

For Pregnant Women—Healthy women should also get at least 2 ½ hours per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, during and after their pregnancy. It is best to spread this activity throughout the week. Healthy pregnant women who did vigorous-intensity aerobic activity prior to getting pregnant can continue doing so during and after pregnancy. If you are pregnant, talk with your health care provider how and when activity should be adjusted over time.

Four Types of Physical Activity

Here are descriptions of the four general types of physical activity:



Balance

Balance activities help prevent injuries from falls. They are designed to strengthen specific areas such as the upper thighs. These activities are better for older people who are just starting physical activities. Balance exercises should be carefully added to a strength exercise routine. Many balance exercises can be done sitting, lying down, or holding on to stationary objects such as the back of a chair.



Endurance

Endurance activities, also known as aerobic activities, increase the heart rate, work the muscles, and increase the rate of breathing. These kinds of physical activity improve overall fitness. As a result, they may delay or prevent diseases like diabetes or heart disease. Building endurance makes it easier to carry out everyday activities. Endurance activities include brisk walking, swimming, cycling, or jogging.



Strengthening

Strengthening activities are also known as weight lifting or resistance training. Examples include lifting light weights and using resistance bands. Strength training builds bone and muscle, and helps to preserve strength, independence, and energy. These types of activities may also reduce the signs and symptoms of arthritis, osteoporosis, heart disease, obesity, and back pain.



Flexibility

Flexibility exercises or stretching helps keep your joints flexible and reduce your chances of injury during other activities. It may also prevent or help in the recovery from injuries. Gentle stretching for 5 to 10 minutes helps your body warm up before and cool down after physical activity.

Important: Talk with your health care provider if you plan to increase your physical activity level or start an exercise program. If you have not been active, start slowly.

What is the “F-I-T-T” Concept?

“F-I-T-T” stands for these four aspects of physical activity:

- **Frequency:** How often do you do the activity?
- **Intensity:** How hard or how intense is the activity?
- **Time:** How much time do you spend doing the activity?
- **Type:** What type of physical activity is it?

Getting Started with Physical Activity

Ask your healthcare provider these questions

- Is there any type of physical activity I should *not* do?
- How much physical activity should I start with?
- Are there exercise programs I can join?



Make a plan

- Set a goal to be physically active for **30 minutes** most days of the week.
- Write your start date on your calendar and tell a friend.
- Pick activities you enjoy. Try walking, swimming, biking, dancing, or an exercise class.

Get ready



- Wear shoes and clothing that feel good.
- Drink a glass of water before you start. Have extra water ready if you need it.
- Start slowly. After 5 minutes of slow, gentle movement, stop, and stretch. This will keep you from getting hurt and sore.
- Move fast enough that you feel a little out of breath, but not so out of breath that you can't talk.
- Slow down again for the last 5 minutes.
- Now stretch again to cool your muscles down.

What keeps you ...



... from being active?

If you think you can't be active because ...	Then think about ...
The weather is bad	Being active indoors, for example, at the mall or inside your home.
You don't have time	Making time by adding activities to your daily routine such as walking to work or using stairs.
You don't have enough money to join a gym	Going to a recreation center, join the YMCA, or a community wellness program.
You don't want to exercise by yourself	Involving your family, friends, co-workers, or neighbors.
You don't have anyone to babysit your children	Being active with your children by walking in the park or playing sports. Or find a kid-friendly gym.
You don't have a place to be active in your neighborhood	Doing physical activities in the comfort of your home with exercise videos, weights, dancing, etc.
Exercise is boring	Selecting an activity that you like. Remember, dancing and gardening are types of exercise.

It's never too late to start being more active!

Be active all day

Besides doing formal exercises, you should keep moving throughout the day. Any activity can help you burn calories and give you more energy. Here are some ways you can be active all day:

- ✓ If possible, walk instead of drive
- ✓ Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- ✓ Work in the garden, rake leaves, or do some housecleaning every day
- ✓ Park far away from the your destination, then walk to it
- ✓ Walk down every aisle of the grocery store
- ✓ Walk in place or stretch while you watch TV
- ✓ Walk around the house or up and down stairs while you talk on the phone
- ✓ Get up from your desk and take a lap around the office once each hour while you are at work

Why physical activity is important

Physical activity can help you stay healthy. It can lower the risk of:

- High blood pressure
- Coronary heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes

Physical activity can help you do many things.

- Climb stairs and not get out of breath
- Keep your weight down (along with a healthy diet)
- Sleep better
- Deal with stress better
- May help lighten your mood and make you feel more relaxed

Being active can help you feel better, too.

- You can have more energy
- You may have better balance and prevent falls

Sitting around and not moving can lead to serious health problems.

When you are physically inactive, you are more likely to develop diabetes, heart problems, aches and pains. **It's never too late to become more physically active.**

"I knew I needed to stay active, but I thought it was hard to be physically active given my busy schedule.

I followed the easy steps listed. Know what? It worked! I am at a healthy weight and feel better than I have in years."



How do I get started?

Check with your health care provider if you plan to increase your physical activity level or start an exercise program.

Ask your health care provider these questions:

- Is there any type of physical activity or exercise I should not do?
- How much physical activity should I start with?
- Are there exercise programs I can join?

Ready, Set, Go! Follow these steps to stay active:

Step 1: Make a plan!

- Talk with your health care provider if you plan to increase your physical activity level or start an exercise program. If you have not been active, start slowly.
- Set a goal to be physically active for 30 minutes most days of the week.
- Write your activity start date on your calendar and tell a friend.
- Pick activities you enjoy. Try walking, swimming, biking, dancing, or an exercise class.

Step 2: Get ready!

- Wear shoes and clothing that are comfortable.
- Drink a glass of water before you start. Have extra water ready if you need it.
- Start slowly. After 5 minutes of slow, gentle movement, stop, and stretch. This will keep you from getting hurt and sore.
- Now start moving again a little faster. Go fast enough that you feel a little out of breath, but not so out of breath that you can't talk.
- Slow down again for the last 5 minutes. Now stretch again to cool your muscles down.

Action Plan for Physical Activity



Check off items from the list below that you will be able to change or improve. Or you can write in your own action items.

The hard part is getting started - You did it!

Work out with family or friends.

This may be more fun. It can also help you stick to a regular schedule.

Keep track of your progress.

Write what you did to stay active on your calendar or a note pad.

Change the type of physical activity you do so you don't get bored.

One day try walking; the next time try a different activity (such as swimming or biking). Check with your local community center for activities.

Give yourself little rewards along the way as you stick to your plan and reach your goal.

Set new goals when you need to. Maybe your first goal was too much. Or take on a more challenging goal.

Decide that being active is something you'll do for the rest of your life.

If your first attempt doesn't work, try again. You can try something else.

Be physically active at least 30 minutes most days of the week.

Walk instead of driving whenever you can.

If you drive, park farther away and walk to your destination.

Keep a record of your physical activity.

Take a walk instead of watching television.

Other:



Be sure to call your health care provider if:

- You have pain in your chest
- You are dizzy
- You are having trouble breathing

Once you become more active, maybe you can make some other changes in your life to help you become healthier. Every step you take is a step to a stronger, healthier YOU!

The good news is that:

Once you get started, you'll begin to feel better. You can begin just by walking, or being more active than you are now. You'll be pleased with yourself, too. You'll know that you can do it, even if it's one step at a time. There are so many choices of ways to be active. You will likely enjoy the activity even more once you do it regularly.

1. Are the items that you have chosen achievable? Yes No

2. What will you do to make these changes? _____

3. When will you make these changes? _____