

A Guide to Physical Activity and Health

Regular physical activity that is performed on most days of the week reduces the risk of developing or dying from some of the leading causes of illness and death in the United States.

Benefits of physical activity:

- Reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease and of developing high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes.
- Helps maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints.
- Helps control weight, build lean muscle, and reduce body fat.
- Helps control joint swelling and pain associated with arthritis.
- May enhance the effect of estrogen replacement therapy in decreasing bone loss after menopause.
- Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression and fosters improvements in mood and feelings of well-being.
- Can help reduce blood pressure in some women with hypertension.



How much physical activity do I need?

The amount of physical activity needed for weight management can be different for everyone. Here are some guidelines to follow:

- *To maintain your current weight:* Work your way up to 150 minutes of moderate activity, 75 minutes of vigorous activity, or an equal mix of both moderate and vigorous activity each week.
- *To lose weight and keep it off:* You will need a high amount of physical activity unless you also adjust your diet and reduce the amount of calories you're eating and drinking. Getting to and staying at a healthy weight requires both regular physical activity and a healthy eating plan.

What is the difference between moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity?

- *Moderate* activity is when your breathing and heart rate are noticeably faster but you can still carry on a conversation.
- *Vigorous* activity is when your heart rate is increased substantially and you are breathing too fast to have a conversation.

Examples of Moderate activities:

- Ballroom and line dancing
- Biking on level ground or with few hills
- Canoeing
- General gardening (raking, trimming shrubs)
- Sports where you catch and throw (baseball, volleyball)
- Tennis (doubles)
- Walking briskly (15 minute mile)

Examples of Vigorous activities:

- Aerobic dance
- Biking faster than 10 miles per hour
- Heavy gardening (digging, hoeing)
- Hiking uphill
- Martial arts
- Jogging or running
- Sports with lots of running (basketball, soccer)
- Swimming fast or swimming lap

For Important Health Benefits, Adults need at least:

2 hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activities

OR

1 hour and 15 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activities

PLUS muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days a week.

Example 1: Moderate-Intensity Activity and Muscle Strengthening Activity						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 minute brisk walk	30 minute brisk walk	30 minute brisk walk	Weight training	30 minute brisk walk	30 minute brisk walk	Weight training
						
Total: 150 minutes moderate-intensity aerobic activity + 2 days muscle-strengthening activity						

OR

Example 2: Vigorous-Intensity Activity and Muscle Strengthening Activity						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	25 minute jog		25 minute jog and weight training		Weight training	25 minute jog
						
Total: 75 minutes vigorous-intensity aerobic activity + 2 days muscle-strengthening activity						

OR

Example 3: Mix of Moderate- & Vigorous-Intensity Activity and Muscle Strengthening Activity						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 minute brisk walk	15 minute jog	Weight training	30 minute brisk walk	Weight training	15 minute jog	30 minute brisk walk
						
Total: The equivalent of 150 minutes vigorous- and moderate-intensity aerobic activity + 2 days muscle-strengthening activity						

***Resources**

- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, A Report of the Surgeon General: Physical Activity and Health, At-A-Glance
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, A Report of the Surgeon General: Physical Activity and Health, Women
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Physical Activity for a Healthy Weight
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Be Active Your Way: A Fact Sheet for Adults
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Adding Physical Activity to Your Life